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The SON of SIRO

REV. J. E. COPUS S. J.

Ida A. Alcéo
Jan. '99

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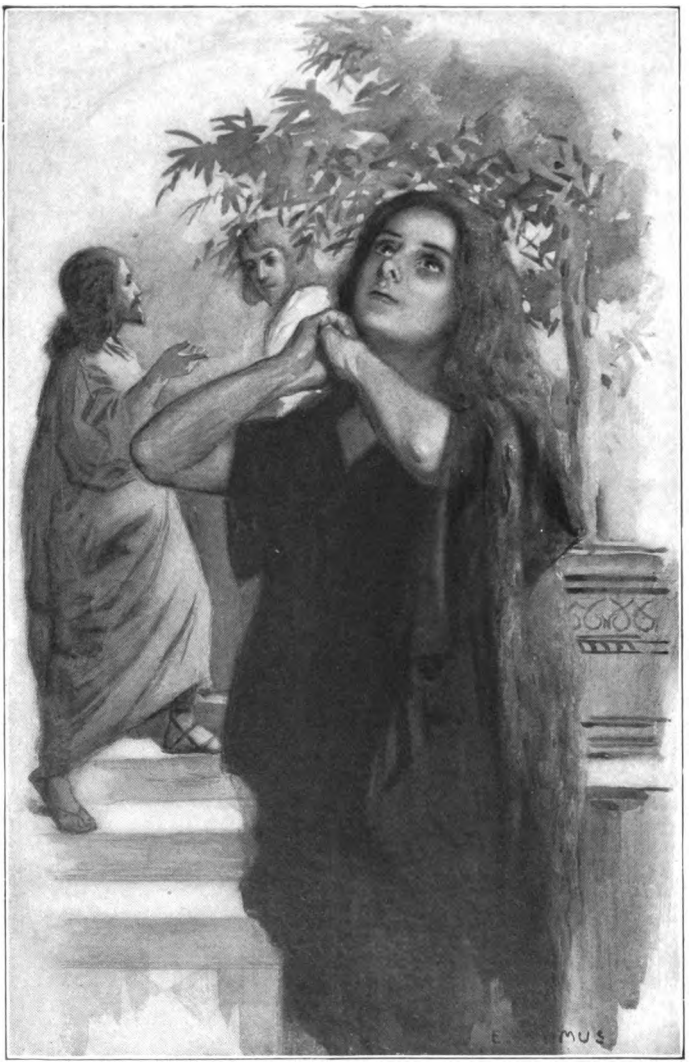
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THE SON OF SIRO

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"She stood there, her heart almost bursting with new emotions, the great penitent of love for all future ages."—Page 270.

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THE SON OF SIRO

A Story of Lazarus

BY

REV. J. E. COPUS, S.J.

Author of
"Harry Russell," "St. Cuthbert's," "Shadows Lifted,"
"Tom Losely: Boy," etc., etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



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FOREWORD

ALTHOUGH there is a large number of beautifully written works of fiction treating of the Gospel period and characters, with Christ as the central figure in the narrative, it is to be regretted that in many instances this central figure is regarded as nothing more than a mere historical character, deprived of the crown of His divinity. The greater number of writers who have entered this fascinating field are afraid to avow openly Christ's divinity, and for this reason their works are mutilated and shorn of their strength. Without this motif, no matter what color and atmosphere and literary excellence a work of the imagination of this class may otherwise contain, it is strained and inartistic.

Although it is a disputed question whether the sister of Lazarus and Mary the Sinner are the same person, yet the Roman Breviary is sufficient authority for the writer of fiction to assume that they are identical.

THE AUTHOR.

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THE SON OF SIRO

CHAPTER I

A JEWISH MERCHANT

THE refreshing coolness of the divan in the mart of Siro, permeated as its atmosphere was with the odor of attar of roses, contrasted pleasantly with the heat and glare of the street. This alcove or recess in the rear of the place of merchandise was frequently visited by elderly Jewish merchants, most of whom were lifelong acquaintances of the owner.

The mart was situated on one of the winding streets in the Tyropœon Valley of Jerusalem, between the hill of Ophel to the south, and Mount Moria, on the summit of which shone the glorious dome of the Temple, to the north. The bazaar was within three minutes' walk of the city gate leading toward Bethpage and Bethany. The latter village, known as the Place of Palms, was within three miles of the eastern city wall.

Siro was a wealthy merchant, having inherited immense riches and much land from his father. His white hair and flowing beard of patriarchal proportions gave him a venerable appearance. His face was not so sallow as the ordinary Jewish countenance. It was ruddy, rather, and the pink skin which showed beneath his white hair told of physical health and wholesomeness of life. He was about sixty-

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five, yet hale and hearty. He enjoyed his years with a keen zest of life, but that which gave him greater satisfaction was the possession of a reputation for integrity among his fellows. Few in Jerusalem had a better name with the merchants of Alexandria, or Antioch, or far-off Rome, where so many of his nationality had settled.

He was a dealer in silks and tapestries and the famous rugs of Persia. The fine linens and muslins of India also formed part of his merchandise, as well as the purple of Tyre. Many curios adorned his shelves. Chased blades of Damascus steel that would bend to a circle, boxes of exquisitely carved ivory, lacquer work inlaid with gold and pearls, jewelry—almost everything considered products of the fine arts at the period could be purchased at the bazaar of Siro.

There were, however, no carven images of any kind; the master of the mart was too good a Jew to break the law of his nation which forbade the importation of images of any kind into the Holy City.

When one of the Roman governors of Judea changed his residence from Caesarea to Jerusalem, and set up images of the Caesar in his palace, north of the Temple, Siro was one of the foremost in demanding their removal, and when the expostulating Jews were threatened with death unless they ceased their importunings, this trader in silks and Oriental merchandise was one of the first to declare that he was

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ready to die rather than see the law of Moses and of his God set at defiance. The governor, being afraid of serious disturbance, sent back the images and standards bearing a representation of Caesar Augustus to Caesarea or to Rome.

The possession of the bazaar did not constitute all of Siro's great fortune. He was wealthy by inheritance. His father, in his early years, having distinguished himself in the military service of Emperor Octavius, had been enriched by valuable gifts in the city of Jerusalem. The reward of his valor comprised also a large house, or castle, with considerable land surrounding it, at Bethany, and an estate on the north shore of the Lake of Genesareth.

The dealer in tapestries and his wife, Eucharia, were born in Judea. Both were of royal blood, having descended from King Benadad, who anciently ruled the city of Damascus, as is mentioned in the Fourth Book of Kings: "Eliseus also came to Damascus, and Benadad, King of Syria, was sick; and they told Benadad, saying: The man of God is come hither. And the King said to Hazael: Take with thee presents and go to meet the man of God, and consult the Lord by him saying: Can I recover of this my illness? And Eliseus said to him: Thou shalt recover."

The subtle perfume which permeated the bazaar came partly from the delicate materials in which the merchant dealt, but more largely from a direct cause. At the further end of

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the place of merchandise was a species of divan, or private room, curtained off from the public mart and amply supplied with cushions. Here important customers from Damascus or Alexandria, from Aden or the far East, were invited to rest and transact their business in the leisurely Oriental fashion.

This recess, or retiring place, was usually invitingly cool. It was lighted by an unglazed latticed window. In the center of the room was a low table of marble, on which was placed a silver dish containing a small alabaster jar of attar of roses, intended for the pleasure and refreshment of the silk dealer's visitors.

The perfumer's art was not held in very high esteem among the Jews. It was classed with that of hair-dressers and pruners of the vine. Siro, however, owing to his inherited wealth, and because he dealt in many other articles more useful than perfumery, did not lose caste among his neighbors, whose custom it was to frequent this alcove for the discussion there of the daily news. On entering, the visitor would lift the lid of the little jar, touch the precious unguent with the tip of his finger, spread it over his palm and rub his hands together. He would then place them before his face and enjoy the perfume of Arabia, or that of Sharon's far-famed roses, with much satisfaction, the odor meanwhile escaping into the curtained room and out into the bazaar beyond, clinging to the various rugs and tapestries.

The Jews were an abstemious race, rarely

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indulging in stimulants, and never during the hours devoted to the sale of their merchandise. Siro had provided this box of attar of roses for the refreshment of his friends, by whom it was very much appreciated. It was a magnet drawing many to his mart. Many came, being acquaintances of Siro, and each having something to tell, the merchant was kept fairly well informed of what happened in the city and in places more distant, without the necessity of much going abroad.

On the morning our story opens, the heat of the Syrian sun was intense. It was the middle of the month Tamuz, or July. The wooden shutters in front of the openings of the bazaar were drawn up by their iron chains as far as the ornamental hinges would permit. Even the gilded lattice-work had been removed. The curtains of the resting-room in the rear had been pulled aside and every door was thrown open.

The heavily perfumed atmosphere was not refreshing. Siro had taken a low bench and was sitting in the shade on his own door-step. This, however, gave him but temporary relief, for, as the sun traveled on its course he soon found himself deprived of the shade he so much coveted. The bazaar was located on one of those crescent-shaped streets which wound around the eastern base of Mount Sion—the hill of palaces. The street was narrow, with no vista in either direction, owing to its curving line.

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For a long time this morning it was deserted, save for one or two boys who alternately petted and teased their patient donkeys. The ever-present lean dogs—the scavengers of the streets of Jerusalem—nosed among the garbage which the householders had thrown into the middle of the street. Siro watched with interest these hungry animals snarling among themselves.

"The Mishna truly says," said the merchant aloud to himself, "that food remains three days in the stomach of a dog because God knew that his food would be scanty."

So intently was he watching the quarrelsome dogs that he had not noticed the approach of an old acquaintance until he was close upon the owner of the bazaar.

"The blessing of the God of Abraham! Surely old age is fast creeping upon thee, Siro, when thou art indulging in the pastime of talking to thyself!"

The speaker was Israel Ben Addai, of the Valley of the Cheesemongers; he had known Siro from his boyhood. By his side stood a young man, tall and straight, whose eyes, looking from beneath heavily penciled eyebrows, were bright and piercing, and appeared to take in everything at a glance. His face was a handsome oval, and had the dark olive tint of a Hebrew of the Hebrews. The nose was a rounded aquiline, the lips somewhat coarse. On the cheeks were patches of bright color, indicating perfect health. Siro regarded him

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with admiration, yet not without a sigh for his own departed youth.

"I bring you a visitor, good Siro," said Israel Ben Addai, "on this hot morning to be refreshed by your wonderful perfumes, the fragrance of which is like unto the odor of the incense in the Temple at the time of the evening sacrifice."

The three entered the bazaar. Siro bowed low to the stranger's salutation, "Peace be to this house," and answered,

"May it also return, my son, a thousandfold into thine own bosom, and may thy life have a perfect close."

The faintest clouding of the features—a shadow of pain, perhaps a presentiment of coming evil, passed over the countenance of the young man.

"Come back with me, I beseech thee, to my divan, and there thou shalt be refreshed with my attar of roses. Many of my friends say that it is better than the red wine of Damascus or the grapes of Sorek. Thou shalt judge for thyself."

As the three moved to the rear of the mart, Israel Ben Addai, with the freedom of an old friend, went in advance. He had already dropped the curtains of the divan, and by the time Siro and the young stranger entered, he had raised the lid of the ointment jar on the table.

"Have patience, good Israel," said Siro. "In honor of the visitor—you know our holy books

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tell us not to be slow in entertaining strangers —I will fetch a newer and better perfume."

Israel Ben Addai replaced the lid of the jar with evident satisfaction. As Siro went slowly upstairs for the richer ointment, Israel Ben Addai said in a low tone to the stranger:

"Thou art honored. 'Tis rarely this dealer in precious wares brings out his richest goods. Thou art indeed favored. None have richer or costlier ointments, or more precious embalming spices. This," pointing to the box on the table, "is good, but he hath better above, amid his stores."

Holding his gaberdine with one hand to keep him from tripping, Siro slowly descended the stairs. As he stepped into the divan, he held out a small golden box having a richly wrought lid.

"Here, good friends," he said, "is a perfume more delicate than even the attar of roses. Will you be pleased to try it?"

He lifted the lid. Whatever may have been the nature of the essence, its delicious odor was so subtly permeating that it seemed almost to take away the breath for the very ecstasy of delight it caused. Israel Ben Addai and the stranger, as well as Siro himself, who rarely indulged in such a luxury, each lightly touched the tip of the forefinger to the precious substance and then, in the accustomed manner, rubbed it on the palm of the hands and inhaled the perfume with evidently intense satisfaction.

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"May the God of our fathers be praised," said Israel Ben Addai, with a sigh of gratification, "for giving to the earth and to the skill of man such blessings as are here contained."

He pointed to the little golden box which the host still held in his hand.

"Amen," replied the stranger, with equal enthusiasm. "The Lord is indeed bountiful to His chosen people. This is fitting for the anointing of Aaron's beard. 'Tis richer than the oil of gladness that flowed down even unto his beard."

"Where didst thou procure this marvelous perfume?" asked Ben Addai, as he stroked his beard with his scented hands.

"That is a secret," replied the bazaar merchant, "which belongeth to our family. Be ye content, good friends, with the pleasure it affordeth you, nor seek to learn more."

The dealer proceeded to restore the precious box to a treasure chest in the room above.

"Rest ye, friends, I pray, on the divan cushions. The day is very warm; even the fountain in the court gives but little coolness," he said, as he began to mount the narrow dark stairway.

Nothing loath, Ben Addai and his companion sank down in luxurious rest on the cushions. The young man's eyes traveled searchingly around the bazaar, which he could see between the curtains. He noted, with a feeling of envy, the rich merchandise piled upon the tables. He wondered how much

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wealth was stored away in the iron-bound chest which stood in one corner of the divan. This large box had a peculiar fascination for him. While examining its three strong locks, he remarked:

"Is it not true that the owner of this mart is one of the wealthiest merchants in Jerusalem?"

"That indeed is so," replied Israel Ben Addai. "He has large dealings with the priests of the Temple. He sells them much rich material for their sacrificial vestments and fine linen for their ephods. The vestments last not long, and when soiled they are used to make wicks for the Temple lamps. He hath great traffic with Annas and with Caiphas because of his known honesty."

"Does that form the extent of his business?" asked the visitor.

"No. There is Herod's household, and there are the Asmonean princes who live on the other hill, in the southwestern part of Jerusalem. They and their women are purchasers of many rich robes from Siro. Know, friend, that with his father's business he inherited his father's good name. His own thrift and prudence hath not failed to add, yearly, large sums to his wealth."

"Then in that strong chest there is probably gold enough to equip an army," said the stranger, with earnestness.

"Peace!" said Israel Ben Addai. "Be mindful of thy words. Stone walls may have ears.

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If thou hast any designs reveal them not, nor speak thy secret desires to any one. More especially tell them not to Siro, for none in the Holy City have, apparently, accepted the present condition of our people more compliantly than our friend in the room above."

The young man shrugged his shoulders impatiently. The action appeared very significant to Israel Ben Addai. He thought he perceived by the young man's manner that he was harboring some great design. He would have questioned him, but hearing Siro now descending the creaking staircase, he remained silent.

"Israel Ben Addai," said the merchant, as he re-entered the divan, "thou art wanting, my friend, in courtesy to me and to my visitor."

The cheesemonger blushed and began to say something, thinking that perhaps Siro had overheard their conversation. He had no opportunity to offer excuses, for the merchant, not noticing his confusion, continued:

"Thou hast allowed me to entertain a friend of thine, and, I presume, a visitor to our holy city of David, and hast not told me his name."

"Ah! pardon my negligence! The familiarity of old friendship between me and thee hath caused me to forget. Let me make amends. This, good Siro, is Hezir, the son of Abbas of Jericho, to whom may the Lord send peace and length of days. This young man's father once offered me safety and hospitality when Herod issued that cruel order to slay all the infants

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in and around Bethlehem, where I was then sojourning. This wicked Jewish ruler feared with an insane fear that some king had been born who was to usurp his power. When the order was issued, as you remember, ten years ago, I fled from Bethlehem to Jericho with my children, and Hezir's father received me with hospitality and sheltered my little ones. You have not forgotten the slaughter, Siro?"

The question, harmless as it appeared, aroused the merchant to the greatest excitement.

"Forgotten!" he cried, with deep emotion. "Ah! never shall I forget that time! Never shall the wail of those infants, as they were being slaughtered so ruthlessly, cease ringing in my ears. Even now, in the quiet of the night, I hear the despairing shrieks of those poor mothers! Herod's order was executed with the utmost severity. Children of all ages were massacred. Many fathers and mothers were cruelly put to the sword for attempting to save their offspring. Oh, it was maddening! Horrible! Horrible!"

Siro spoke rapidly and in a high tone. His face became purple. His gestures were those of one under the greatest stress of excitement. The mention of this event in his nation's history always moved him to deepest anger, which, as is mostly the case with placid men, when once thoroughly aroused, took considerable time to pass away.

"Forgive me, Hezir Bar Abbas," said Siro,

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after a few moments' pause, during which his face began to assume its normal color, "pardon me, I pray, if mine anger gave my tongue more license than seemeth wise; but to witness what I did then—I was inspecting an olive orchard which I possess at Bethlehem when the iniquitous decree was executed—to see what passed before these eyes of mine—oh! It were less than human if mine indignation rise not against so cruel a tyrant. May his right hand wither if I—I——"

His voice rose again as his anger mastered him. He seemed almost choking when he raised his right hand as if to pronounce a malediction.

"My father!"

The voice was clear and musical. It came from a handsome youth who appeared to be about sixteen. He had pushed aside the heavy tapestry, and stood close to his excited parent, his right hand lightly touching the upraised arm.

"Good sirs," said the youth, "I beg of you to change the subject of your discussion. This one excites my father too grievously in his old age, and we try to avoid it."

The stranger and Ben Addai saw before them a young man in the prime of early manhood. He was remarkably handsome. He stood perfectly erect, with a bearing noble, yet without trace of haughtiness. There was something in his manner which captivated Hezir Bar Abbas at once. It was the calm dignity and the power which quiet reserve always be-

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stows. The excitement of the moment had given his cheeks a flush of carmine which was in marked contrast to the paleness of his face. The brow was high and rather narrow, but very white, the nose somewhat long and perfectly straight. The large, lustrous eyes—so peculiar to his race—were shaded by sweeping lashes, which formed a marked feature, and matched well the strong, dark brows and wavy hair. The face was the long one rather than the customary oval. The large white teeth were generally hidden behind richly curving lips of a brighter red than in most young men of his age. Early manhood's adornment on the upper lip heightened the effect of his personal beauty, which was that of the more refined Jewish class. The son of Siro was recognized as one of the handsomest youths in Jerusalem—even among the students of the Temple, which gathered its scholars from among the Jews of the dispersion from all parts of the known world.

"So, so," replied Siro, "I will not be excited any more. I will be calm. There! do not let thy fears arise. Go back, my child, to thy silk table. You see, my friends," he said, turning to his visitors, "my son is always fearing that harm may approach me when I speak of that slaughter, and to tell the truth, I do at times feel the blood rush to my head at the remembrance of its atrocity. At such times it destroys my peace. Otherwise, I try to pass my days in calmness and contentment, thankful

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for the blessings the God of our fathers hath sent me."

Seeing that his father's excitement had passed, the youth retired into the bazaar. Not unobserved by Siro, Hezir Bar Abbas had watched the scene with a slightly cynical air, but, feeling himself, nevertheless, constrained by the demands of politeness to say something, he remarked:

"I am filled with grief that my visit should have been the occasion of so much perturbation to you. I see that my servant with the horses is already at your door, so I will depart."

He bowed to his host and began moving toward the door, at the same time casting a searching glance around.

"May the God of Abraham be with thee," said Siro, "may thy substance increase and may thou have length of days. Go, in the name of union of the Holy and Blessed One and of His Shekinah, the hidden and concealed one. Blessed be the Lord forever."

Hezir bowed low at the benediction. In doing so, he managed to let the other two men precede him to the street door. A close observer would have noticed that, as he walked slowly down the apartment, his eyes were busily scanning everything. There were, at the moment, three assistants besides the son of Siro at work in the mart. Hezir Bar Abbas paid little attention to the merchant's son, but was seeking for some apparently preconcerted signal from one of the others.

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One of these was a Jewish youth a little older than the son. Another was a pure blooded Arab, tall and dark. He was clothed in the white robe of a Bedouin. Hezir was surprised to see this child of the untamable race of the desert working contentedly within the four walls of a house. The third was a handsome, copper-colored Egyptian from Cairo. His lips were thin; his nostrils quivered sensitively like those of a high-bred horse; there was a strange look of fear in his eyes. He was called Pathira by his master. Bar Abbas looked longest into this face, as if expecting recognition.

It would have taken keen sight to detect any understanding existing between Pathira and Hezir Bar Abbas as the latter walked slowly down the room. A rapid glance, however, had passed between them. A slight smile of satisfaction overspread the features of Hezir. He then, by a rapid, questioning look, appeared to ask for some information. Pathira understood. With a deliberation which precluded the possibility of arousing the suspicion of either son or father, he drew aside, as Bar Abbas passed the spot, a heavy piece of tapestry and put his two fingers upon a wrought-iron coffer on the shelf behind him. As soon as he saw Hezir Bar Abbas had observed the casket, he allowed the hanging curtain to fall into its place again, and made the ordinary salaam, with the other assistants, to the departing visitors.

Siro and his son, with Israel Ben Addai and

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Hezir, had now arrived at the street door of the bazaar, where further mutual expressions of good will were exchanged before parting.

"Come, Pathira," said Siro, "assist the stranger to mount his horse. Zamlech, do thou hold the horse's head."

The father and son and the cheesemonger stood in the doorway of the bazaar. Pathira held the stirrup for Bar Abbas. At that moment there occurred a whispered dialogue between these two.

"The coffer?"

"Jewels, most noble lord."

"The oaken chest?"

"Gold."

"The son's name?"

"Lazarus. He will inherit all."

"Good."

"And you now release to me my Nigrita?"

"Perhaps," said Hezir Bar Abbas, carelessly, as he settled himself in the saddle.

Pathira sighed heavily. He then bowed in an obeisance almost to the ground. There was, nevertheless, a dangerous glitter in his eye, which Bar Abbas did not fail to notice as he caught the last glimpse of the swarthy face before turning to wish the others farewell. He did not look at Pathira again.

As the stranger, followed by his servant, rode in the direction of the northern gate, there was a satisfied smile on his face. By the unwitting instrumentality of Israel Ben Addai, who felt himself under great obligations to the

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father of Hezir, this latter had discovered that the bazaar contained almost untold wealth.

Whatever Bar Abbas was at the present moment, or to whatever depths he descended at a later period of his life, he had formerly been actuated by patriotic motives. In his early manhood, he had writhed under the yoke which enslaved his people. The unjust exactions of the Judean procurator had aroused his anger. It would be difficult to say whether his feelings in times past had been more bitter against the officials who represented Roman authority in Jerusalem, or the venality and supineness of many of his influential countrymen residing in Rome. These, he knew, had large power with the Caesar Augustus if they would but use it in behalf of their oppressed race at home.

Years before he had studied the conditions of the vast Roman Empire and realized the fair-minded disposition of the emperor. He felt that this great ruler desired to govern well and wisely. He had recognized that the wealth possessed by his own countrymen in the Imperial City gave them an influence which, if properly used, would make not only Judea and Galilee, but the whole Syrian province one of the most contented among the Roman possessions.

In those times, now long past, Hezir Bar Abbas had dreamed dreams. In his visions of youth he had seen an Israel free. He had imagined her again the mistress of the nations, the glories of Solomon revived, the power of

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David restored. Why were his brethren content to bow their necks beneath the yoke of a foreign oppressor? Was not the Messias of the nations to come about this time, if the prophecies of the holy books were true? And, oh! the shame should He find His chosen people the serfs of a pagan power!

So often had he entertained these and similar thoughts by day, and dreamed them by night, that at one time, in the enthusiasm of youth, he had begun to believe himself selected by the Almighty to free His chosen people in preparation for the approach of the Messias.

He had worked upon the feelings of many, so that at one time, several years before this story opens, he had a considerable number of followers, ready at his word to organize and even to rise in rebellion. There was, however, one fatal difficulty—an almost entire absence of funds. Without money he saw that no undertaking would be more than a mere ebullition of popular feeling. When he realized with dismay that he had no means of procuring the money necessary for a campaign, there came the disillusionment.

He regretfully relinquished the hope of ever leading an insurrection. On the ruins of his patriotic aspirations there arose a host of selfish motives. He became sordid. He was unwilling to resign the influence he had acquired over many enthusiasts, and for some years after used them as instruments of his own aggrandizement, stimulating them with prom-

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ises of occasions of future deeds of glory and final great rewards. In some cases, he was quite unscrupulous in the means he employed.

His dealings with Pathira is an instance. Pathira was the son of a hierophant in the temple of Bubaste, in Cairo. Bar Abbas had sent men, devoted to him even to infatuation, as emissaries to Egypt. Under his instructions they had spirited away the wife of Pathira, holding her as a hostage, the condition of her liberation being that Pathira himself should take up his abode in Jerusalem, obtain service with Siro, and, if possible, get into his confidence, learn the amount of his treasures as well as where they were stored, and give information as to their possible capture.

Hezir Bar Abbas had never seen the young Egyptian, the victim of his daring scheme, until the visit paid to the bazaar related above. The captors of his wife had once taken Pathira to Jericho, and amid much simulated dread of the "great lord," had imbued the Egyptian with a superstitious awe of Bar Abbas and permitted him to get a glimpse of him by stealth, as if it were a great favor granted at personal risk.

Common with many of his race, Pathira had from his infancy a superstitious dread of all Jews. He fell into the trap set for him, and through love for his young wife began to work for Siro, in order that, by fulfilling the imposed conditions, he might liberate her and, happily reunited once more, might return to the land of the Pharaohs.

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CHAPTER II

A PUZZLING TEXT

THE merchant's white mule waited patiently at the door of the bazaar. A swarthy, barefooted boy, wearing a brownish linen cloth around his waist and over his left shoulder, stood at the animal's head. It was late in the afternoon of the day on which Hezir Bar Abbas had visited the wealthy trader.

Siro had remained later than usual at the mart. That afternoon he had sent his son and Zamlech to the palace of the Asmonean princes, on the hill of Sion in the southwest portion of the city, with a quantity of costly textures, from which one of the princesses of that house desired to make selections for purchase.

In former years, after seeing the camel loaded with the merchandise, Siro would have accompanied the driver and have conducted the sale himself. Latterly, it had been his custom, owing to his advancing age and a noticeable decline of vigor, to send his son on these profitable errands, after giving him the fullest instructions as to prices and the method of barter or sale.

Lazarus had been detained longer than usual. The caprice of the intending purchasers had been particularly wayward. Twice had Zam-

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lech carried the bundles to the camel's back, and had been obliged to re-enter the atrium of the palace with them. The return to the bazaar, in consequence, had been delayed much beyond the usual time, in fact until near the twelfth hour.

The family of Siro did not live within the walls of Jerusalem. His ample wealth enabled him to occupy the castle in the village of Bethany, three miles east of Jerusalem, on the road leading to Jericho. To this domestic retreat the father and son repaired each evening after the business of the day had been concluded. The distance was traveled at an easy pace, Lazarus holding the rather long leading-rope, and usually walking by the side of his father, as the animal required but little guiding along the oft-traveled road.

Before leaving the city walls, the two were compelled to pass through narrow, winding streets lined with a variety of marts and booths. These were familiar to father and son, but had a stranger accompanied them he would have seen many sights to interest him. In the dark recesses of the marts the squatting artisans kept watch over their wares, while busy producing exquisite hand-wrought designs in metals, or ivory, or precious woods. The pavements were often occupied with merchandise for sale. Here was a heap of fruit, sheltered from the sun by a black camel-hair cloth on a slender frame. By the side sat the owner on the ground, ever watchful, but never soliciting

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a purchaser for his melons, gourds, pears, or pomegranates.

A little farther on one would find a display of iron and bronze work, fashioned with infinite care and patience. Another booth contained a display of carved and perfumed woods. Dealers in precious garments, or in the materials for these, were plentiful. Donkeys and camels for hire were frequently seen lying down in the middle of the street. Caretakers of these animals dozed away in the afternoon sun on the steps of the houses, and even in their somnolence held tightly to the ropes which prevented the beasts of burden from wandering away and being lost.

Dogs were everywhere. Anon might be seen a religious procession emerging from some synagogue, headed by a priest wearing the cup-shaped turban, and with phylacteries on forehead and arm. Occasionally one was seen emerging from a wealthier synagogue, displaying a richly embroidered ephod, which was held in place by gold or silver brooches at the shoulders. When a priest of this class led the procession, he crossed his hands over his breast, and, with eyes raised to heaven, appeared to be contemplating, or holding converse with the great Jehovah. In places the streets were so narrow that they were roofed over, forming the prototype of our modern arcade.

There were two gates at this time leading out of the city in the eastern wall. One was known as the Fish Gate. It was a little to the north of

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the Temple, and the road from it passed by the Garden of Gethsemani. The second was approached from the south side of the Temple, and the road leading therefrom was a somewhat shorter route to the village of Bethany. The two roads converged at some distance outside the city walls.

On this day Siro, contrary to his custom, did not pause on his way nor enter one of the four hundred and eighty synagogues, or places of prayer, that dotted Jerusalem, but directed his son to lead the beast of burden to the great Temple on Mount Moria.

Passing along the western boundary of the Temple, he came to the senate house of the Sanhedrim, and then to and around the corner of the Tower of Antonia. Here he dismounted and, leaving the mule in charge of his son, passed through the Jews' porches of the great edifice, for it was near the time of the evening sacrifice. Already had the silver trumpets of the priests rung out their clarion call over the city. It was a sound clear and joyous; it traveled through every street and was heard in every house. The valleys and gorges of the rough mountain land almost surrounding Jerusalem echoed back its music. The warning to prayer was answered by a returning shout from every inhabitant within the walls.

Siro, ascending the steps to the court of the Gentiles, passed the Beautiful Gate, of wrought bronze, and entered that portion of the Temple reserved for the Jewish males. The evening

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sacrifice had already begun, as a straight column of smoke ascending from the altar of incense in the inner court testified. The devotions of the merchant, in consequence, did not occupy many minutes, and he and his son were soon on their way again.

Both were well known to the Roman guard who watched at the Fish Gate, closing it for the night upon a given signal from the Roman garrison in the Tower of Antonia.

"Thou art late to-night, Siro," said the Roman officer, who had known the merchant's father.

"I timed myself, good sir. I watched the Temple clepsydra, for I knew that in five minutes the gates would close, and had I not passed out before then I should be compelled to stay at my bazaar for the night."

This happened once in a while, and then young Lazarus would pay the officer a right good fee as inducement to open the small wicket for him. At these times of unexpected delay Siro preferred to remain in the city rather than undergo the labor of walking the distance, his no light weight making it more than a Sabbath day's journey for him.

"I like not the look of our visitor of the morning," said Siro, as the mule pursued its leisurely pace along the road to Bethany.

"Why dost thou not, my father. He appeared to be courteous and pleasant. Never was a man more pleased than he when you offered him some of thy richest perfumes."

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"That was so, my son, yet—yet I do not like his looks. There was too great a restlessness in his eye. Know ye aught of him, Lazarus?"

"The Egyptian whom you have recently taken into your service, sir, appears to know him. From the conversation they held while Bar Abbas was mounting his horse, I am convinced they have met before. Two strangers would not talk so rapidly, nor in so low a voice."

"Know ye aught of what they said?"

"Nay, my father; but Pathira seemed unwontedly affected. All this afternoon he sighed and sighed again. He was much abstracted. I believe he could find nothing to-morrow of the merchandise he put away to-day."

"That is strange," mused Siro. "Pathira came from Cairo with letters from Elbon, a respected merchant with whom I and your grandfather have had dealings these many years. His word with me has almost as much weight as the Mishna of the Rabbis."

"Pathira appears very sorrowful," pursued the youth.

"Ah, that is not so wonderful," answered Siro; "every man born of woman hath his own sorrow. Every heart knoweth its own bitterness. What saith the Gemara? 'Sighing breaketh the body in halves.' Each one hath his burden to bear. When, in my youth, I studied the Mishna and its Gemara, I learned this saying: 'He who passes forty consecutive days without suffering some affliction has received his good reward for his lifetime.'"

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The elder man became silent. Filial respect, inherent in Jewish youths, prevented Lazarus from breaking the thread of his father's thought. The mention of sorrow had made Siro retrospective. He was thinking of his own Eucharia, the wife of his bosom, who, six years before, had been laid to rest in the family sepulcher. Since then the loss of the mother of his children had been a continual grief. He had never fully recovered from the shock caused by her death.

Going home one evening in the same leisurely way they were now proceeding, he was met by one of his Bedouin slaves, who told him that his mistress had been taken suddenly ill and urged his master to hasten to her side. She had been smitten with sunstroke. The husband arrived a few minutes before she expired. From the attack she had never recovered consciousness to bid farewell to husband and children.

Apart from this domestic sorrow, another great grief perpetually wrung the old man's heart. His neighbors, and even those who knew him more intimately, were under the impression—it had been voiced by Israel Ben Addai to Bar Abbas that very day—that the wealthy dealer in rugs and tapestries now completely acquiesced in the subjugated condition of his race.

Had his neighbors known him better they would have discovered their error. That the city of his pride and of his love, the city of David, the holy Sion of the prophets, where

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God had dwelt visibly in the Shekinah among His chosen people—that this glorious city of his love, around which the devotion of a lifetime had centered; that this city should be subject to foreign domination of a people who knew not God and had even brought their abominations within the walls; that the proud race of Abraham should be compelled to bow the neck to a haughty conqueror, and suffer in silence grievous and petty humiliations from men as heartless as they were incapable of understanding the Jew—all this was gall and wormwood to the father of Lazarus.

The taxes and many other imposts he bore in uncomplaining silence. He could amply compensate himself for these drains upon his purse by the sale of merchandise in the household of the Roman governor and among the other Romans who now lived in Jerusalem. He was affluent enough to pay without inconvenience all that was exacted of him; but to be in subjection to the Romans; to be permitted or forbidden at the pleasure of these foreign rulers to enter or leave the city of his fathers; to be compelled to refrain from appearing on the streets during certain hours of the night; in fact, to be nominally free but in reality shackled and thwarted at almost every turn, was, next to the loss of Eucharia, the greatest sorrow of his life. His cogitations lasted longer than usual. They were broken by an expression of anguish:

"How long! how long, O Lord God of Abra-

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ham, Isaac, and Jacob! How long, O God of our fathers, shall the wicked triumph over thy people! Arise in Thy might, O Holy One of Israel. With the strength of Thy right arm scatter the unbelievers, and purge Thy holy city from its defilement."

Young Lazarus listened respectfully to his father's aspirations. Many times before he had heard similar prayers offered by him on their homeward journey.

Although Lazarus scarcely realized the intensity of his father's religio-patriotic feeling, not being of an age to grasp its full significance, yet, in his own way and degree, he also felt the thrall of his race's subjection. He longed for freedom, not with the intensity of his father, but after his own fashion, and with a desire proportionate to his years.

With Siro, as with all the older Jews of that period, the Almighty was the great Deity of the Chosen People. His patriotism and his religion were so merged as to be practically one and the same thing. In the young man, now walking at his side, there existed a broader view. He had studied and was now engaged in studying the Mishna, or text of the Talmud Yerushalmi, with its Gemara, or exposition, under Gamaliel, who was the most liberal of the Rabbins of the Temple. The young man's desire for the rehabilitation of the dispersed Jews in the city of David, although springing from more altruistic motives, was as thorough if not as intense as that of his father.

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"Thinkest thou, my father," he asked, "that the subjection of our people to the Roman yoke will cease ere long?"

When Siro had quite recovered from his emotional outbreak, he replied:

"The time is certainly at hand, Lazarus, when this should take place. According to our holy books, especially the prophecy of Daniel, the seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, have now passed. At this time our whole nation is restive and filled with expectant desires for the coming of the Messias of Israel. What say the priests of the Temple on this subject, my son?"

Lazarus was well able to give an answer to this question. He was one of the many Jewish youths who early every morning attended the Temple school to learn the Scriptures and the Talmud. The educated man of that period was one who studied these two books and possessed a knowledge of magic. So important was the acquisition of this knowledge of the art of magic considered that none were allowed to sit in the Sanhedrim without mastering it.

Of late, the teachers of these youths had spoken much concerning the coming of the Messias and the fulfilment of the prophecies. It was by means of these schools of the Temple that the people in general had been aroused to the anticipation of some great event about to take place. The youths listened with eager attention, and repeated in their homes the glorious facts they had learned in the sacerdotal

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colleges—facts which gave the people strong grounds of hope for a speedy liberation from the thralldom to which they had never thoroughly submitted.

"When I returned from the schools this morning," said Lazarus, "I was about to ask thee the meaning of some mysterious sayings of the teachers, but Bar Abbas and Israel Ben Addai came to see thee, and thus I was prevented."

"What is thy difficulty, my child? It may be that I can assist thee."

"It is this, my father. The priest Abiathar, whose course was last in the Temple, now teaches for one month before he returns to his family at Magdala. This morning he spoke in glowing terms of our nation's coming liberator who is soon to appear. He read from the sacred parchment which contains the words of the prophet Daniel, these words:

" 'I beheld therefore the vision of the night, and lo! one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and he came even to the Ancient of Days and they presented him before him. And he gave him power and glory and a kingdom; and all peoples, tribes, and tongues shall serve him; his power is everlasting power that shall not be taken away, and his kingdom that shall not be destroyed.' "

"Ah, these are glorious words!" interrupted Siro. "They speak of a mighty one of our nation who shall come and restore the glory of David and of Solomon. Thanks be to the God

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of our fathers that the time has come—that I, even I, in my old age, may expect to see the mighty deliverer come and restore Israel. It is all clear, my child; wherein findest thou the difficulty?"

"It is not this passage of the holy book that is strange, O my father," answered Lazarus. "After Abiathar had finished, Hillel read from another scroll of the prophet, and his reading seemed to contradict what Abiathar had read."

"Nay, nay, my son; nothing can contradict this glorious prophecy; whatever else the priests may have read from the parchments can not unsay this great promise! A Jewish redeemer must come!"

The face of Siro was flushed with enthusiasm. His eyes, fast dimming with age, sparkled as he thought of the happy day of deliverance. He appeared as one refreshed with wine.

"What could unsay the great promise, Lazarus? What sayeth Hillel the teacher?"

"This morning," replied the youth, "he read from the fifth scroll of David the strange words which have filled me with dread, and made me think that if the Messias do come his success will indeed be most brilliant, but also most transitory."

"How so? How so, my son?"

"Because of the words the teacher read to us this morning. They are these: 'And after sixty-two weeks Christ shall be slain; and the people that shall deny Him shall not be His. And the people with their leader that shall come

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shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be waste, and after the end of the war the appointed desolation. And He shall confirm the covenant with many in one week, and in the half of a week the victim and the sacrifice shall fail, and there shall be in the Temple the abomination of desolation even to the consummation, and to the end.' "

"Thou art a good student," said his father, when he had finished the long quotation, "and a joy to my old age, in that the time thou spendest in the schools is not wasted."

The clear, pale face of Lazarus flushed faintly with the pleasure his father's praise gave him.

"I thank you, sir. I strive, as thou hast taught me, to fulfil the duties of the hour. Whatever my faults may be, I realize those moments spent with the doctors are precious. But what thinkest thou, O my father, of this strange contradiction?"

"Did not Hillel or Gamaliel explain it to their disciples?"

"Nay. Gamaliel appeared not to-day. The grief on Hillel's face was so plainly seen when he read this terrible passage that none durst ask him further questions, and I had too great a reverence for the sacred teachers to ask privately the meaning of the prophecy."

"In that, my son, thou didst well. It would ill become thy youth to take such a course."

"But, my father, what can be the meaning of so dire a threat? These words seem plain. At

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first the Messias of God will come with power, and be victorious, yet in the end there will be catastrophe. Even the Temple of the Most High shall be destroyed. The sacrifices, which have never been interrupted since the return from the Babylonian captivity, shall cease."

"I can not tell," answered Siro, sadly. "God speaks mysteriously to His chosen people by the mouth of the prophets. It is not given to all to interpret the hard sayings of the inspired seers. It is not for me to say what is the true meaning. The priest and the rabbins must explain these words, for they are the interpreters of God's word for us."

Silence fell between the two. The old man's thoughts dwelt on the difficulties arising from the youth's inquiries. He did not come out of his revery until the mule stopped of its own accord at the well of Bethpage, two-thirds on the way to Bethany. This straggling village took its name from the number of luxurious fig-trees that abounded there. Many of them had grown to ample proportions, affording shady arbors by the wayside. The public well, at which the animal stopped, was within one of these cool and shady bowers.

"I like not this Hezir Bar Abbas," said Siro, speaking of what came again uppermost in his mind, as they resumed their journey.

"It appears, my father, that Ben Addai should be a guarantee of his character. Thy lifelong friend would not bring thee one whom he would not trust."

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"Why dost thou distrust this Bar Abbas?" asked the boy, who now strode rapidly close to his father's side.—Page 43.

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"Thou sayest truly. Knowingly, he would not, of a certainty. But Bar Abbas was a stranger to him until to-day. Israel Ben Addai felt himself under obligations to the visitor, whose father shielded him and his family in the Herodian persecution."

"Why dost thou distrust this Bar Abbas?" asked the boy, who now strode rapidly close to his father's side, as the animal, on nearing home, hastened its steps.

"I know not; yet I have a presentiment that my family, or some member of it, will be greatly injured by this man."

"And their young men shall see visions, and their old men dream dreams," muttered Lazarus, half aloud. His father heard him, but could not understand what he was saying.

"What sayest thou, Lazarus?" he questioned.

"Oh, sir," answered the youth, in some confusion, "forgive me if I seem disrespectful. When thou saidst thou hadst a presentiment of evil, the words of one of our prophets came to my mind, and I murmured them half aloud: 'Their young men shall see visions, and their old men dream dreams.' May it not be, O my father, that in this case of Hezir Bar Abbas thy presentiment of coming evil may be only a dream?"

Seeing his father shake his head, he continued:

"Not, perhaps, in the sense of a prophecy, but a mere dream. Why should the chance visit of a stranger to thy mart destroy the calm

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of thy mind or the peace of thy days? Thou mayest never see this man again."

"That may be true! that may be true! May the God of our fathers so direct it. Yet I have the feeling strong upon me that I and my house shall mourn the day this stranger came under my roof."

"I am sorry to hear these words. Be not disturbed. Put the incident from thy mind, and forget that thou hast ever seen the stranger."

"I have tried, and will try to do so. All this afternoon, and at intervals on our journey homeward, I have felt the strange dread of coming evil. Something portentous, I know not what, seems hanging over my head. I have the same feeling which I experienced when thy dear mother, Eucharia, died so suddenly six years ago. All that day, I remember now that I look back on it, there was hanging over me a dread premonition of coming evil. Ah, little did I dream that it would assume the form it did! Ever since that day I have been in heart as the sparrow that mourneth on the housetop."

Once more he lapsed into silence. What could a boy of the age of Lazarus offer by way of consolation? He had not the experience which would enable him to advise one so much older than himself. Partly from the knowledge of his own incapacity, partly from innate filial reverence, he maintained a respectful silence, which lasted until the sagacious animal stood still at the dismounting block at the castle at Bethany.

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"Call the slaves, Lazarus, and give me thine arm. My years weigh heavily on me to-day."

The house servants came at once to attend to their master. One relieved him of his long white traveling cloth, another brought his staff, while another led away the white mule which had so often carried the old merchant to and from Jerusalem.

"Reverend sir," said Lazarus, "thou shalt banish these gloomy thoughts from thy mind when the slaves have bathed thy feet and thou art refreshed by the evening meal."

The white-haired merchant, leaning heavily on his son's shoulder, and shaking his head in a despondent way, entered the house.

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CHAPTER III

A DOCTOR OF THE LAW

IN THE evening of the day in which occurred the events related in the preceding chapters, Zadiel Ben Israel, a doctor of the law, sat at his ease on the flat roof of his house in Jerusalem.

The sun had sunk, a crimson globe, in the west. Bright disks of silver were fast studding the blue dome of heaven. A slight westerly breeze gently swayed his white beard to and fro. His fingers locked together, his hands resting on his knees, he sat motionless, in deep meditation.

His purple gaberdine fell about him in graceful folds. In the freedom of domestic seclusion, the picturesque, turban-like head-gear, which partly distinguished him as a rabbi, or doctor of Israel, had been laid aside, so that his lofty brow and nobly shaped head were revealed. Clear, piercing eyes and strong lines about the mouth indicated a mind capable of grasping firmly abstract things. It was a noble face, yet upon closer scrutiny there were evident signs of an unsatisfied mind striving for something not yet attained.

Zadiel Ben Israel was deeply versed in the Jewish law and in the knowledge of the sacred

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books. Among all the doctors who frequented the Temple, few, except the great teachers of the schools, could compare with him in that knowledge and wisdom which made the Hebrews so superior a race of men.

Several vellum scrolls were lying at his feet. One was unrolled and lay across a small table at his right; it was a copy of the prophecies of Isaias.

Zadiel's meditations lasted longer than usual, for strange things had occurred in the Temple that day. He, in common with all devout Jews of that time, was stirred with the thought of the Messias, who was now almost daily expected to appear in Israel and restore the kingdom of David to its pristine glory and splendor. Long he sat pondering deeply over the text of the prophecy. At times his eye would glisten and shine with a fiery triumph as he read, or when the memory of some glorious promise regarding the greatness of the Messias to come would pass through his mind. Then, again, his mobile features would change with the passing thought, and the marks of an unspeakable sadness would come over his face as he dwelt on one or other of those mysteriously mournful sayings of the Messianic prophecies.

In addition to his usual studies of the Holy Scriptures he was occupied with other and thrilling thoughts. There had appeared that day in the Doctor's porch a youth possessed of unwonted wisdom and knowledge of the prophetic books. Zadiel and other wise men of

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Israel, who had met for their daily discussion, were not only charmed and interested in him, but after a time began to experience a feeling of awe in his presence. An unknown power was on his lips. The spirit of wisdom guided his words. Never had any of the wise men of Jerusalem answered and discussed questions so clearly and with such evident certainty and truth as did this youthful stranger.

The ancient student now remembered that the boy had listened more than he had spoken, as one who recognized his own youth. He had asked questions rather than disputed; quoted rather than interpreted the prophecies.

At the time the venerable Jewish doctor felt, although he did not fully realize it, that there was something more than human in the child's appearance; and now, in the solemn quiet of the eastern night, as he recalled the events of the day, he experienced anew the sensation of overpowering reverence. The thought of this youth had filled his mind ever since he had seen him; after the evening meal his whole attention was given to it.

"It is certain," he said, half aloud, "that the prophecies point to the present for the coming of the Messias. By accurate calculation the time is twelve years overdue. Can this fair young boy who is endowed with such marvelous wisdom be the Great One! Oh! can it be that he is the salvation of Israel! What did old Simeon mean, a dozen years ago, when this child was brought to the Temple—for some of the wise

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men in the porch said they recognized him as the same and knew his family—oh! what did old Simeon mean by saying, 'Lord, now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant in peace, for my eyes have seen Thy salvation.' Thy salvation! oh! if I thought—" and Zadiel Ben Israel was again lost in deep cogitation. His eyes shone with fire and gladness as he pictured to himself for the hundredth time the coming greatness of the now down-trodden and captive Israel.

The soft, scent-laden breeze of evening fanned his flushed brow and venerable white hair. From his position on the flat roof of his house he could see many other roofs occupied by families whom the heat of the sun had kept within doors all day, but who now, like himself, were enjoying the cool night air. In many windows lights were burning. Here and there the view was obstructed by some tall tower occupied by Roman soldiery. Above all, dominating all, even at night, by its massive proportions, was the glorious dome of the great Temple. There was a peaceful quiet over the city. The sounds of labor had ceased when the sun went down. Nothing was heard save the distant bleating of sheep, or the mournful lowing of cattle destined for the daily sacrifice, which were kept without the city walls.

Presently the young daughter of Zadiel appeared on the housetop bearing a salver on which were a silver goblet and a dish of sherbet, flavored with fruit juices and cooled with snow. This was the sage's evening beverage,

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and it was always brought by his daughter's own hand. After the refreshing drink had been prepared, and the goblet reverently placed in the old man's hand, the maiden moved a cushion near to his feet, and partly kneeling, partly reclining, rested her hands on his knee, looking lovingly into his aged face.

In common with all Jewish daughters, she was deeply reverential toward her parents. Although her attitude was entirely free, it lost none of the filial respect due to age and parental authority. Zadiel gently stroked her rich brown hair.

"What has my daughter learned to-day?" he asked in a fond, soothing tone.

"Oh, my father, this afternoon I committed to memory many verses of our holy David's psalms," and then with a glow of natural pride, not unmixed with a childish satisfaction, she repeated portions of the hundred and ninth psalm:

"The Lord said to my Lord: sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

"The Lord will send the scepter of Thy power out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies."

After expected praise had been bestowed, she asked:

"And will the Christ, the Messias that is to come so soon, be a great prince and rule our nation?"

Zadiel told her it was the common belief of

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the Jewish people that this psalm which she had just quoted would be literally fulfilled.

"Oh! I wish the time had come!" exclaimed the maiden, with all the ardor of her race, "but do you know, my father, I believe that to-day I have seen the Messias of Israel!"

The announcement was sudden. Zadiel was somewhat startled. Had he not also experienced new and strange sensations that day! Had he not been thrilled!

"What idle prattle is this, my child? Hast thou seen one of the impostors? There are many in our land at this time. Put such ideas from thy head."

"But, sir, they are not the idle thoughts you take them to be, nor can I put them away. To-day as I returned from school with my nurse Ruth, my mother met me and took me to the women's court of the Temple some time before the evening sacrifice. After that we walked out by the eastern gate and up to the olive garden which lies on the other side of the brook Cedron. When we returned the Temple doors were closed for the night. We hurried along, with our faces veiled because of the many strangers here for the great feast. I saw——"

She stopped suddenly in her narrative as if her senses had been arrested by the recollection of some great event. She appeared to see some one a great distance away. Her lips were slightly open, her eyes had a far-away look in them.

"Proceed, proceed, my daughter," said Zadiel

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Ben Israel, surprised at the sudden cessation of speech.

"Oh! my father, as we were passing the priest Zadok's house, we saw a youth of the most kingly bearing. Never could he be surpassed even in one's dreams. Just as we were passing, the door of the house was opened and he asked an alms for charity's sake. He was rudely repulsed and driven away with harsh words. The sorrow manifested on the calm, beautiful face pierced my heart, and my tears fell abundantly. A strange anguish of pity came over me, such as I never felt before. My mother was equally affected. She stood as one transfixed, while the tears ran down her face. I could not take my eyes from him as he walked slowly and sadly down the street."

"What was he like—this child that so much interested you both?"

Zadiel put the question more to humor his daughter than from any present great interest he had in her narrative. He supposed she spoke of some poor Jewish boy, who perhaps had come to Jerusalem for the feast of unleavened bread without sufficient provision.

"Oh, sir, I can not adequately describe him," she continued. "He appeared to be about my own age. His brow was high and noble, and exquisitely white. The hair was rather long and wavy, and as the sun glinted through it, it appeared to have a tinge of gold. The eyes were deep and calm and large. They were overarched by full eyebrows, and they seemed to

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pierce through and read one's very soul. The mouth was beautifully formed; the lips were firm, yet gentle. As we saw him then there were marks of pain about the mouth, caused, no doubt, by the rebuff he had received at Zadok's door. The head was excellently poised; his gait, as he went away from us, was free and majestic. There appeared an ineffable serenity on his countenance. His face was of the most delicate, marble whiteness, seemingly almost transparent, yet of perfect physical health. The blue veins on his forehead and temples were clearly visible."

"The same! The same!" muttered Zadiel Ben Israel to himself. As the description proceeded he had grown more and more interested.

"The same wonderful youth! Thou describest well, my daughter. Canst thou finish the description? Proceed, proceed, my child."

Zadiel's daughter, owing to her own absorbing enthusiasm, did not perceive that her father had become quite excited. She continued:

"His hands, my father, were long and slender, and his thin fingers were tapering. His feet were shod in worn sandals, which made me think he had come from a distance. His outer garment was a white tunic. Around the neck and down the front was a broad, yellow band. Oh, my father, truly he looked a prince. Would that you had seen him!"

"I have seen him! I saw him, my daughter, in the Temple porch to-day."

"You! You saw him!" exclaimed the excited

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girl, "you saw him, too! Is he not a prince? Is he not a king? Is he not a fitting one to be the Messias of Israel, the savior of our people?"

Both had risen in their excitement. The dark olive complexion of the beautiful child was now all aglow with her enthusiasm. The doctor of the law was again experiencing that mysterious awe which had so strangely affected him that very day in the Temple. He thought of the Shekinah of God's holy place, of the Burning Bush which Moses had seen, of the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night—of all God's marvelous manifestations to His chosen people, yet the remembrance of none of these affected him as did his daughter's recital, and the remembrance of his own experience.

"Father," exclaimed the young girl with that earnestness in her voice with which she was accustomed to pronounce the Shema, "I believe that he is the God of Israel, and that our redemption draweth nigh."

The aged student of the Scriptures and the Talmud was visibly moved. His daughter, in the freedom of youthful speech, had put into words that which he scarcely dared formulate in his thoughts.

"Retire, retire now to rest, my Miriam," said the excited father, who wished to be alone with the thoughts that were surging through his brain. The maiden at once knelt and received the nightly blessing:

"O Lord our God, cause us to lie down in peace and raise us up again to life. O, our

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King, spread over us the tabernacle of Thy peace; strengthen us before Thee in Thy good counsel, and deliver us for Thy name's sake. Be Thou for protection about us, keep us far from the enemy, the pestilence, the sword, famine, and affliction. Keep Satan from before and behind us, and hide us in the shadow of Thy wings, for Thou art a God who helpest and deliverest us; and Thou, O God, art a gracious and merciful King. Keep Thou our going out and our coming in, for life and for peace from henceforth and forever."

After this benediction Miriam immediately retired to her room. Zadiel Ben Israel, for a long time paced the roof of his house, revolving in his mind all that he had seen and heard. His daughter's rapt enthusiasm had made a deep impression on him. His life had been given to the study of the sacred books, and the coming of the expected Messias predicted for about this time had occupied his thoughts and colored them from his boyhood. His good, even austere life had predisposed him to accept the manifestation of this youth, could it be found that in him were fulfilled the prophecies.

"Who can this wonderful child be who exercises so great an influence on my wife and child and on myself?" he asked himself many times. "Never one spake as he spoke in the Temple. Who knows what the end may be? Who can tell?"

Before retiring to rest that night Ben Israel determined that should the wonderful child re-

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appear in the Temple on the morrow, he would see that he should want neither food nor lodging. He would bring him to his house, and tender him its hospitality, "and who knows," he thought, "who can tell but that my house may be honored above all in Jerusalem." The old doctor of the law felt a glow of satisfaction at the thought of entertaining this remarkable child, who had so greatly interested him that day in the street.

The next day events happened as he had anticipated. The wonderful youth appeared a second time in the Temple, modestly taking his place among the doctors. Zadiel noticed with a secret satisfaction, that there was an unusual interest manifested by the learned men when the youth reappeared among them. His demeanor was that of perfect simplicity. The sages unconsciously grouped themselves picturesquely around him.

The spirally-curved, massive columns of the Temple porch made deep shadows across the inner pavement. Farther back, in the center of a group of the wisest and most venerable men the known world could produce, was a small, low table on which were lying several scrolls of parchment, copies of the sacred prophecies, and a few vellum-bound books which were held together with golden clasps.

Zadiel sat on a low Oriental chair. On his knees was spread an open copy of Daniel's prophecy. Between him and the table, with an air of composure and marvelous dignity stood

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the boy. It was remarked that he never opened a discussion. When answering, his words were unassuming, his manner reverential.

Behind him stood a white-haired patriarch of the nation who in his excitement had risen to catch the wonderful answers the youth was giving. To the left was a much younger man, with short black hair and sparse beard. He, too, had risen, and seemed anxiously expecting a reply to a question put to the youth by Zadiel Ben Israel. Behind him, and a little to the left, stood another of the learned men, who, contrary to the custom of his race, had a shaven face and wore his hair cut short around his head. He resembled a Roman senator rather than a doctor in Israel. He, in common with the others, had retained the bright-colored garments to which all Hebrews were so much attached. The pure white robe of the youth stood out in chaste contrast to so much color all around him.

The discussion, or rather, on this occasion the series of questions, had continued for some time after the usual hour, until at length Zadiel Ben Israel intimated that the session had lasted long enough. The learned men almost immediately separated. The youth and Zadiel were left alone on the porch.

"My child," said the old Jew, kindly, "if you have no shelter for the night, I shall be most pleased to offer you the hospitality of my house."

The youth bowed gracefully in acceptance. A

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faint smile of gratification played around his mouth.

"I hear you are of Nazareth?" questioned the aged student of the law.

"I am of the line of David, the royal prophet," was the reply. The listener started at the words.

"A prince of the house of David! It shall be a blessing for me and my family if thou wilt come and abide with us as long as thou remainest in the city."

The youth bowed again, and said:

"I live at Nazareth, and my kinsfolk are now returning there after the great feast."

As he spoke a shade of sadness overspread his countenance, which reflected all the emotions passing in his soul. He was sad, for he knew that at that moment his mother was looking anxiously for him among the returning Nazarene pilgrims.

Zadiel Ben Israel, accustomed to men and to reading character, stood in wonder at seeing such sadness on the boy's face. He was not to learn the cause until the following day, when the youth would meet his mother again, and hear the wonderful reply to her sorrowing questions.

As the two entered the house of Zadiel they were met by Miriam and Leah, her mother. Water pots were placed for the washing of the feet of the host and his young guest. They were then conducted to the cenacle, where the evening meal was at once served.

The family stood near the lounges for the

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prayer and the blessing of food which the master of the house gave, yet neither Leah nor Miriam was surprised when Zadiel Ben Israel turned to the beautiful boy and asked him to give the blessing. He complied, raising his face and hands to heaven for a few moments, while a hushed awe fell on the little company.

As soon as the meal was over all repaired to the pleasant roof. The volume of parchment—the treasure and the glory of the house of Ben Israel—was brought out, and the discussion which had been interrupted in the Temple was resumed. The venerable scholar was soon again deeply interested in the prophecies of Isaias. The young guest promptly and readily answered all the questions put to him, as if willing to impart to the aged student as much information as possible in return for the hospitality tendered him.

"How is this, my child," at last exclaimed the venerable sage, "how is this that your knowledge so far exceeds mine, who have spent nearly threescore years in studying the sacred books for the good of our nation?"

"Let us be content, reverend sir," replied the youth, with singular grace and modesty, "with what God has given. A holy life is better than much wisdom, and to fulfill the law of God is better than to know all the sayings of the prophets."

When Leah and her daughter came to the roof the conversation did not assume a different tone. In those times there was nothing

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frivolous in Jewish matron or maid. In the little assembly on the roof there was a kind of joyous intellectuality, which this evening was enhanced in some way by the presence of the wise young guest. The mother talked earnestly of the coming of the expected Messias, Miriam listening all the while with rapt attention. The subject, an all-engrossing one at this time in every Jewish family, seemed not distasteful to the visitor. The more he spoke of the prophecies and their fulfilment the more enraptured became Miriam. Zadiel regarded the youth as an inspired oracle. Suddenly turning to his guest, with an almost pathetic wistfulness in his voice, he asked:

"Shall we, even in our day, see the Messias of God?"

"Thou shalt indeed do so, for the kingdom of God is come unto you," was the reply given solemnly. Turning to Miriam, who was standing near, with hands clasped and upturned face, rapturously drinking in every word, he said in a low, authoritative tone:

"And thou, daughter of Zadiel of Israel, shalt not only see his face, but whilst thou livest it shall not depart from thee."

As the beautiful youth stood in the solemn light of the half-moon, under the grand canopy of the eastern stars, a wonderful gracefulness was manifest in him. The young girl was enthralled by the majesty of his presence. To her his placid face, lustrous eyes and slightly parted lips, and supernal beauty seemed to re-

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veal something more than human—something altogether divine.

"Art thou not in very truth the Messias?" she asked in intense excitement, yet in as low a tone as he himself had used.

"Thou shalt know and see in the time to come, and a manifestation shall be given thee even in this street," was the mysterious reply.

The speaker pointed over the parapet into the street below—a street which led through one of the city gates and up to a hill where the malefactors of the nation met their punishment.

The fervent maiden could restrain herself no longer. Falling on her knees, she exclaimed in impassioned tones:

"I believe thou art the Christ that is to be, the Messias who shall redeem our nation!"

Retaining her posture of homage, she reverently kissed his hand. Leah and her husband watched the outburst of fervor, but neither reprehended their daughter. So impressed were they with the wonderful character of their guest that this profession of faith in his divinity neither startled them, nor appeared to offer an occasion for remonstrating. Both were more than half inclined to pay him similar homage.

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CHAPTER IV

THE PLACE OF PALMS

THE small village of Bethany, where Siro lived, was luxuriant with beautiful palm trees whose straight boles supported at their summit feathery bunches of leaves, beneath which hung clusters of dates. The ever verdant leaves of the graceful crown were six or eight feet in length.

It is scarcely to be wondered at that the people of Palestine were proud of the palm, or tamar tree, so many and various were the uses to which it was put. The inhabitants of Judea and Idumea often celebrated in verse the three hundred and sixty uses of the tamar. In many parts of the Orient the natives subsist entirely on its fruit. It contains medicinal properties, and camels feed upon the date stone. From the young and tender leaves couches are made, as well as baskets, bags, mats, and brushes. The stalk of the leaf is used in making cages for poultry, and for fences, while from the fiber of the trunk are manufactured thread, rope, and rigging for vessels. The sap, when fermented, furnishes a spirituous liquor. A sort of flour, even, has been made from the pith of the trunk.

At the present time there are few palm trees

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in the Holy Land, but at the period of our story they were abundant. They clustered so thickly around Bethany that the village acquired the name—the Place of Palms. Some trees grew to the height of one hundred feet. So characteristic were they of Judea that the victories of Vespasian were celebrated by the striking of a coin representing a disconsolate woman sitting under a palm tree, with the inscription, "Iudaea Capta."

The vicinity of Siro's house was profusely ornamented with these noble trees. As Bethpage was noted for its cool arbors of fig trees, so Bethany was famous for the grander beauty afforded by the tamar. The traveler entering the village from either direction passed through an avenue of the beautiful trees. The enclosed gardens were ornamented with them, while on the gentle slopes of the hills on either side of the road could be seen, here and there, towering above the olives and the vine-covered oaks, the tall palm's nodding plumes, as they gracefully swayed and fluttered in the breeze.

They were too familiar a sight to attract the attention of Siro, who, with the aid of his long staff and his son's shoulder, entered the arched passageway of his castle. Turning to the right he went into a small room, or porter's lodge, where strangers were received, and, sometimes, urgent business transacted. Servants brought water and towels and bathed the feet of father and son, who rested on the low couches which lined the walls of the room.

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The wealthier Jewish houses were nearly all of the same pattern, varying only in minor details. Every one of them was built in the general form of a hollow square, leaving in the center an open space or court. All the windows opened into this court, with the exception of a small aperture above the entrance arch, which served the purpose of a vantage ground for observation, giving the slave-porter opportunity to examine through its wooden lattice-work the nature and probable business of the one seeking admission.

The inner court, as was the case in the house of Siro, was paved with flat native stone. Sometimes designs were wrought in these pavements. Siro's court was ornamented with a fountain, which was allowed to play incessantly, giving forth a musical, plashing sound heard in all the rooms of the house. This fountain helped to moderate the temperature, and made the court an inviting place of resort.

A colonnade ran around the walls, with a balcony above and a cloister below. From both of these the rooms could be entered. Rarely were there passages in the houses, nor did one room lead into another. Between the pillars of the balcony there was an ornamental screen or lattice work, serving the triple purpose of safety, ornament, and seclusion.

The courts of the wealthier householders, who imitated the Romans not only in the style of their dwellings, but also in their adornment, were ornamented with small palms, oleanders,

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and other flowering shrubs which could be cultivated in boxes. Here were to be found the rose and lilac, the tulip, lily, and hyacinth and the odorous violet, according to their season.

Ropes were stretched in the court, enabling the servants to draw a purple or a pink curtain over the space below, should the family desire to occupy the court when it was desirable to be sheltered from the direct rays of the sun.

This open court was, practically, the living place during the summer months. Here were spread carpets and piles of cushions. Most of the meals were taken here. Probably this constant living out of doors made the Jews the hardy and long-lived race they were. Friends were entertained and meetings took place in the open court. Very rarely even the most intimate friends of the family entered the rooms during the warmer months of the year. All the amenities were observed under the blue sky, or under the stars of heaven. In the larger houses there were two or even more courts, one being reserved exclusively for the family, the others occupied by the slaves or the domestics.

Every house possessed a flat roof, which, after sundown, was a favorite resort, for there on most nights of the year a western breeze was blowing from the Mediterranean. On this roof was a room reserved for strangers or guests. The open court, the roof, and this pleasant upper chamber were supposed to meet all the demands of hospitable accommodation.

As Jewish women rarely left their homes for

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business, and even more seldom for pleasure, it was customary to seek or create as much comfort at home as each one's means permitted. It must be remembered that the heat of the summer in Judea is excessive. The Syrian sun, from an almost perpetually cloudless sky, pours down his merciless beams, baking the ground and superheating the sun-dried brick houses, and not unfrequently rendering uncomfortable those built of stone.

At such seasons the roof of the house is the most comfortable place, not only for spending the evening, but for sleeping, on account of being above the region where gnats and flies and stinging insects abound, as well as above the mists and vapors of the night.

The male portion of the family would often enjoy the luxury of sleeping out of doors, sometimes not even divesting themselves of their garments, but falling into healthy and dreamless sleep on the cushions where they had reclined after the evening meal. At other times their beds would be brought to the roof. It must be remembered that to carry one's bed was not so great a feat of strength for a Jew, for the ordinary Jewish bed was a very thin mattress, which could easily be rolled up and carried under the arm. Some beds consisted of merely a piece of carpet, with a pillow.

The night sky of the Orient is studded with stars in countless number, the brilliancy of which can scarcely be conceived. The planets are like pendant silver lamps. The hanging

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moon seems very close to the earth. Some of the Rabbins have said the moon was the shepherdess and the stars her countless sheep roaming over the pastures of heaven.

While lying on a soft carpet, with the head propped up by a pile of luxurious cushions, and beneath the broad expanse of the purple Judean night, one obtains a better idea of immensity than probably could be got from any other sight in the world. So resplendent are the moon's rays when at the full that then the force of the Scriptural expression can be realized: "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evils . . . so that the sun shall not burn thee by day, neither the moon by night." Nowhere, except in the Holy Land, do the words: "The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork," have so full a meaning, for nowhere can the expanse of the glittering universe be better or more clearly seen.

The soft rustling of the palms below in the court, or the larger ones on the hillside, the musical tinkling of the silver bell worn by the leading camel in a passing caravan, the bay of the shepherd dog on the distant hill, all seem but to accentuate the peculiar silence of the night, which is not broken by the plashing of the fountain below, nor by the sweetly mournful melody of the bul-bul in the grove near by, as all these minor sounds are in harmony with the stillness of the time. Even the white night owl, as it whirs over your head, does not disturb the severe quiet. There is nothing more

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typical of the peace of God than the star-lit, cloudless night as seen from the flat roof of a Judean house.

When Siro and his son had finished their ablutions, and had put on their robes for the evening meal, they proceeded to the court where the rest of the family awaited them. Everything was in readiness for the coming of the master. The slaves in the kitchen beyond were awaiting the signal to place the viands on the table. A golden vessel, having a long neck, filled with rich Damascus wine, and four engraved chalices were already on the polished ebony board over which were scattered in profusion the petals of roses. Fruits—pears, apples, purple plums, red and white grapes—were piled high on a silver dish. Citrons and small muskmelons were on another.

The court was redolent with the odor of roses. The flag-stones were covered with thick carpets and rugs. Low dining couches were between the wall of the house and the two tables placed in the form of the letter L. This arrangement enabled the servants to pass unimpeded to and from the region of the kitchen without disturbing any of those who were partaking of the meal, at the same time permitting the diners the pleasure of viewing the cool fountain and the flowering shrubbery in the court. The meal was lighted by silver lamps suspended between the pillars supporting the balcony, and by sconces fastened to the wall.

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On each table stood a candelabrum containing seven wax tapers.

Owing to the absence of Siro and Lazarus during the day, except on the Sabbath and on the greater solemnities, the evening meal at Bethany was the principal one. It was eaten in a leisurely manner, and was interspersed with pleasant conversation, and at times with bantering and teasing among the younger members of the family. This often amused the aged father, who took much delight in the good-natured repartee of his children. He was, nevertheless, ever watchful skilfully to change the conversation should it become personal, or be in danger of degenerating into bickering or rancor, a not uncommon fault among members of the same family.

Since the death of their mother, Eucharia, the son and two daughters were more than ever attentive to their father, constantly surrounding him with loving solicitude.

Mary was younger than Lazarus, and several years younger than Martha, from whom she differed in style of beauty and in character. Martha was tall and straight and moved with a queenly stateliness. Her hair was raven black and was coiled high on the head, giving her the appearance of being taller than she really was. Over the head was thrown a lace mantilla, which fell in graceful folds about her shoulders. Amid her tresses were interwoven ropes of pearls. The face was almost without color—the lips lacking the ordinary redness.

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The cheeks, notwithstanding their paleness, had a dusting of olive tint on them, thus removing all impressions of ill-health. The eyes were large and penetrating, with an energetic look in them even when the face was in repose. The nose was long and straight; the mouth wide and determined.

The paleness of face, the stately dignity of movement, the dark puce-colored robe almost devoid of ornament, gave one the impression there was a tinge of melancholy in her disposition. She was a thoughtful woman, but her chief characteristic was an unfeigned kindness of heart, which ever prompted her to do something for the comfort or convenience or the pleasure of others. She had long since been recognized by the family as the mistress of the household. This was no small task, as the household comprised many servants and a large number of slaves. Notwithstanding that Siro himself managed the husbandmen who tilled his fields and tended the olive gardens and vineyards and almond trees of the estate, yet Martha found scope for her energies in regulating the household.

The magnificent dress of the Jewish women of her time could do little to enhance Mary's loveliness. The Syrian sun had early rounded out and perfected her figure. She was exquisitely molded and formed on the lines of most perfect natural beauty, yet with a promise of future greater splendor. Her movements were freer than those of her sister. They were

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even vivacious at times. The naturally graceful undulations of her body as she moved from place to place were in striking contrast with the almost regal dignity of Martha. This symmetry of form and perfect health gave peculiar charm to the almost sensuous loveliness of her face.

Her brow was flat and broad. The color of her cheeks which shone through her oriental duskiness resembled sun-ripe peaches. The large, strong eyebrows and long lashes, which added to the brilliancy of her wonderful eyes, enhanced the richness of a beauty far outshining her sister's colder grandeur. The nose was shorter than Martha's. It was straight—of rather a Grecian than Jewish type—with delicate, dilating nostrils. The full lips were a bright red, and were in strong contrast with the teeth behind them. Mary's hair was abundant and of a rich dark brown.

This evening it was fastened back in large rolls high on the forehead and bound with fillets of gold in which were set rows of pearls. A gold comb fastened this mass of coiled tresses, and, with the aid of several silver pins, kept and securely held in place a veil of pink silk of very light texture, allowing it to fall over the shoulders and down the back as far as the waist.

The costume which Mary wore was chosen with care from among the eighteen supposed to form the outfit of a rich Jewess. It was of pink-colored silk, held in position at the waist

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by a broad girdle of crimson embossed with suns embroidered in yellow silk. Tied at the left side, and the ends fringed, the girdle nearly touched the ground.

Mary had laid aside the usual house sandals, which were merely pieces of leather held on the feet by thongs, and she now wore crimson slippers of the same shade as the sash. They were embroidered and gemmed and so made that under the pressure of the foot they emitted a delicate perfume. Her sleeves were large and open, reaching to a little below the elbows, having large hanging tips nearly touching the knees. The under sleeve above the elbow was of white silk. The arms, perhaps for the sake of coolness, were bare, giving opportunity for the display of several gem-studded bracelets. Above the elbow of the right arm there was an extra adornment consisting of an elaborate ivory and gold armlet in which were set some large diamonds.

Although Mary did not wear the traditional turban of the Jewish women, she had not dispensed with the customary forehead ornaments. From an encircling band of gold were suspended a row of golden plates or coins across the forehead just below the roots of the hair. The ring of gold in the nose, which was usually worn at that period, she had dispensed with. In her ears were heavy gold pendants, the tiny bells attached to them giving out a tinkling sound every time she moved. A musical jingling was also produced by golden anklets

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composed of rings loosely fastened together with golden wire.

With that love of display to which Oriental women are so given, the personal adornment of this younger daughter of Siro was completed by two necklaces. One was worn high around the throat; it was constructed of fine gold plates, in which were inserted here and there a ruby, an emerald, or a small diamond. The second necklace, made of a long fine gold chain several times folded and thrown around the neck, was fastened in front at the crimson girdle.

The usual ornaments of Jewish males were much simpler. A seal or a ring was worn on the hand, or a small chain around the neck. A few of the wealthier class, on occasions of great importance, wore a bracelet above the wrist on the right arm. This was made of gold, ivory, and precious stones. Neither Siro—who could well have afforded this luxury—nor Lazarus, ever wore these trinkets. The father's costume, when in domestic seclusion, was a loose red silk gaberdine, fastened at the waist by a yellow silken sash. His richly embroidered slippers were of pale blue silk. These had pointed toes and were without heels or backs. While at meals they were left at the foot of the couch.

"Welcome! welcome! my father!" cried Mary as she caught sight of Siro entering the court. "Thou art late in returning to-night. I greatly fear the viands will be spoiled."

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She ran across the carpeted stones and impetuously threw her arms around his neck, kissing him on both cheeks. Siro warmly returned her embrace. She was the child of his heart, much petted, and, in consequence, more or less spoiled.

"Thanks be to the God of our fathers, no harm hath befallen us."

"Why didst thou delay, then, my father?" asked the beautiful daughter. Siro pinched her cheek playfully while answering:

"In trafficking, my child. The business of the mart kept us to-day later than usual. Knowest thou, little one, that I have added to thy portion this day no small sum? May I not now expect instant forgiveness at thy hands? and thou wilt plead with Martha for me, wilt thou not?" he asked whimsically, with evident intention to amuse his favorite child.

"I would rather have thee than the largest portion," replied Mary somewhat petulantly. "Have we not enough? Canst thou not give up thy bazaar to Lazarus now, and stay always at home with us? Thou art getting aged, my father."

The old man realized the truth of the last statement. He sighed softly.

"Not yet, my child, not yet—in a few years more. Lazarus is too young at present. Grieve thou not. In a few years more I will relinquish the trafficking, and will rest at home with thee and Martha. Knowest thou——"

"What, my father?"

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"Knowest thou that I intend this castle for Martha; my houses in Jerusalem and the mart shall be the portion of Lazarus, and to thy share shall fall the castle at Magdala, which the emperor bestowed on our family. It stands by the Lake of Genesareth."

"Magdala to be mine! oh! oh! my father!" cried the enthusiastic girl in her delight. Her face was rippling over with joy. "When, my father, when shall I——"

"When I am gathered to my fathers."

She stopped suddenly. Over her face came the shadow of a cloud.

"Then may I never inherit it," she said vehemently.

"What meanest thou, my daughter?" asked Siro, in some surprise. Her changing moods were ever a source of surprise and even anxiety to him.

"I wish I may never inherit it, because I would that thou mayest never sleep the sleep of death! Did not our ancestors of the captivity ever cry to Nabuchodonosor: 'O King, live forever!' So I say of thee: O king, live forever—and ever! I do not want thee to die. Thou must not—must not."

The impetuous Mary once more threw her arms around him as if her embrace would ward off the grim messenger. Martha meanwhile was quietly smiling, and awaiting her turn to give her father welcome.

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CHAPTER V

THE JEWELS

THE great feast of the Pasch was over. No longer were the open places in the city and the hills around Jerusalem dotted with the white tents of the countless pilgrims who came yearly to the Holy City. Every road was filled with travelers returning from the great festival.

Large caravans were necessary, as the main roads through the country were in an ill-protected condition. At this particular time they were more than usually unsafe. Bands of robbers had never been so bold, for they had been left for some time unmolested by the soldiery.

The legionaries of the captured province were at the present time engaged in an occupation to which they were not entire strangers. There had arisen one of those periods of financial stringency in Rome. Tyrannical and cruel as Octavius had been while one of the Triumvirate, when he had disposed of the weak Lepidus and was at last firmly established Imperator of the Roman world, he assumed the name of Caesar Augustus, and with it a rôle. He became wise, mild, and just. When his power became solidly established, he encouraged literature and art, surrounding himself with the learning of the age as well as with the wisest of counselors. It was the golden

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age of Roman letters as well as of Roman power.

At this time there was almost universal peace. Augustus was too good a judge of men not to know that if he wished to solidify his power it was necessary to keep the people pleased. In the provinces Rome ruled by the might of former conquests and at the price of eternal watchfulness and inexorable punishment of rebellion.

In the imperial city a different method prevailed. There the plebeians had to be kept in good humor, and even pandered to in their pleasures. To this end entertainments on a gigantic scale were provided. Feasts were given to the ever-hungry populace at enormous expense to the imperial exchequer. Another source of drain was the immense expenditure required by the construction of many public buildings, with which the emperor adorned Rome and other favored cities during the earlier part of his reign. Such heavy expenses more than once depleted the treasury.

In order to supply these deficiencies, and once more fill the state coffers, extra taxation had been imposed on all the provinces and countries which had fallen under the Roman yoke. Many, even, which merely acknowledged her suzerainty were not exempt from these exactions.

Although the province of Syria had been conquered, the tetrarchies of Palestine had never been thoroughly subjugated. The

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peoples of Judea and Galilee were difficult to govern. Galilee, particularly, rich in mineral wealth, resented the increased taxation. The Rabbins of Jerusalem had a saying respecting this northern province: "If any one wish to be rich, let him go north; if he want to be wise, let him come south." "The hand of Ashur [Galilee] dipped her foot in oil," is the poetical scriptural way of expressing the soil's fertility. The wine of Galilee was rich, and living there was five times as cheap as in Jerusalem.

Under the Herodians, the royal revenues were derived from the crown lands, from property tax, and from the *middah,* or income tax. Import and export duties were imposed. Revenues were raised from the *halech,* or tax on all that was bought or sold. In Jerusalem there was also a tax on houses.

Every town levied its own imposts for its synagogue, elementary school, public bath, support of the poor, the city wall and gates, and other requirements. The distributive justice with regard to these taxes was extremely good, and their administration admirable. In addition to these, every Jew was obliged to pay a tax for the support of the fabric and services of the great Temple at Jerusalem.

While the Jewish taxes were not higher than actual needs demanded, and their collection mild and lenient, the Roman imposts and the method of their gathering were harsh and pitiless. When, therefore, an extra imperial

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tax was levied on a subject people to supply a deficit for the luxurious and sensual citizens of Rome and its ruler, the anger and unrest of the people can easily be accounted for. Rome often found it necessary to make her soldiers the instruments of collecting these levies. Occasionally a Jew engaged in this occupation, but the *moches,* or tax farmers, and the collectors, or *gabbai,* were wholly outside of Jewish social life.

Thus, at this period the legionaries were busily engaged in wringing money from the people for the benefit of Augustus, with the result that numerous marauding bands were sometimes left unmolested for months. Not feeling the weight of the Roman arm, they soon forgot its power and became bolder and more venturesome, rendering the roads unsafe except for such caravans as could not be attacked with impunity.

About a month after the interview of Hezir Bar Abbas and Siro, a traveler might have been seen approaching the city along the northern road. He was dusty and travel-stained and seemed much afraid of being molested by any one whom he met, or who overtook him on the road. He was approaching the northwestern gate of the city along that thoroughfare which, in later ages, was to be known as the Via Dolorosa. The hill of Acra, to his left, seemed to be a cause of much perturbation to him, and well it might, for its slopes were infested with robber bands. Farther to the north lay Mount

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Scopus, or Mount Bezetha, as it was then called. It had an equally unsavory reputation.

As the traveler came near the city he found it quieter than usual, as if it were experiencing a reaction from the previous congested condition during the feast, when every available space had been occupied by pilgrims who had come up to the Passover. Jews, gathered from all parts of the known world, had dispersed for one more year, and the residents were resuming their ordinary avocations.

After looking cautiously over the dry stone wall on either side of the road, the stranger sat down to rest in such a position that he could see through the open city gate the busy scene within the walls. He apparently wished to avoid the crowd inside, and hesitated to enter the city.

The broad, shady arches of the city gates were formerly convenient gathering places for the transaction of business. Now they were occupied by the Roman soldiery, and the trafficking was done just within the city walls. Here the country people hawked the produce of garden, or orchard, or dairy. Here many merchants of the less wealthy class set up temporary booths, wherein they displayed the newest fashions from Rome, or Alexandria, or Athens. Small dealers in the goldsmith's craft vended the art products of Jerusalem. Fruits and milk and bread were everywhere for sale.

Among the booths moved the throng, idle or busy, chattering, chaffering, and not infre-

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quently bandying good-humored witticisms. Anon a company of youths of this musical race would raise their melodious voices, either in one of the Psalms of David, or it may be, occasionally, in some secular song which they had caught from the soldier guards. The crowd would give way respectfully before a Pharisee, who, with haughty humility, and broad phylacteries on arm and forehead, strode past as if he belonged to a different race, or to another world. Children would run screaming with fright should one of the mysterious white-robed Essenes pass by. Few of the ordinary Jews knew much about these weird Therapeutics, and ignorance fed their awe. Curses attended the steps of the publicans.

Artisans sat inside their shops, or by the side of their temporary booths, consisting of a table shaded from the sun by a black cloth made of camel's hair. These solemn looking toilers at various trades exchanged many greetings among themselves, or with probable buyers. Their salutations always had an acknowledgment of God in them. With the Jews religion entered their daily lives, influencing them in their transactions of business as well as in their home circle. Should a priest pass through the motley gathering, he was respectfully greeted by every one, although he scarcely deigned to return a salutation. The learned despised the ignorant and acted, for the most part, according to the injunction given in the Talmud: "The salutation of the ignorant should be re-

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sponded to quietly, with a reluctant nod of the head."

The traveler outside the gate, watching the concourse within, at length laid aside his dust cloth, leaving it on the wall near where he had been resting. He wore a somewhat long, brown outer garment, which was much shorter than the usual gaberdine, and of fine material. He appeared a well-to-do citizen of the Holy City, the soberness of his tunic's color rendering him inconspicuous among the throng.

He passed through the gate and walked carefully among the busy crowd, keeping his left hand within the folds of his tunic as if guarding some treasure. At length he stopped before a booth more substantial looking than most of them. It was a goldsmith's. Vases and boxes of scented wood inlaid with precious metals, coins, and personal ornaments, constituted the display. On one side of the small room was a coffer containing a few precious stones.

Seeing that the stranger appeared interested in his wares, the owner came out to him, and, after the usual salutations, asked him to enter.

"I am a stranger in your city," said the traveler, as he went in.

"Thou art welcome, if thou art a son of Abraham," replied the merchant.

"Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers," said the other, as if to give the merchant a password to his confidence, which indeed it was, in a certain measure.

"What can my small bazaar offer thee? It is

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but a beginning, as thou seest. I hope, with the blessings of increase, to show thee more and richer merchandise when thou comest again; or perhaps thou hast that which I may purchase of thee?"

For answer, the stranger nodded, and looked significantly toward the further recesses of the mart.

"Come this way," said the merchant, having understood the sign, "and I will see thy goods. Perchance I may buy of what thou hast to sell."

The two proceeded to the rear of the room. Their heads almost touched the ceiling, for both were tall men and the room was low.

"What hast thou to offer, my friend?"

The stranger, cautiously and with many a glance around, drew, from the inside pouch of his tunic, a small leather bundle about five inches in length. He carefully untied the thongs, disclosing a wrapping of chamois skin, which he unwound. The innermost covering was of white silk, much yellowed with age, and enclosed a quantity of washed and snow-white wool. On this material, as on a cloud, rested a finely wrought gold necklace containing a dozen diamonds and several smaller rubies. The sight of the precious stones made the merchant's hands tremble with excitement, which also manifested itself in the glittering of his eyes. By an involuntary opening and closing of his fingers he plainly showed his desire to possess the treasure.

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"Thou wishest to dispose of these, my friend?" He then with shrewdness remarked: "Ah! I see they are not all perfect stones."

"Aye, good sir, that is my intention. I claim no greater excellence for them than they possess," answered the prospective seller.

A look of vexation passed over the wrinkled visage of the goldsmith. The other quickly noted it, and ascribed it to his remark. This, however, was not the cause. The merchant realized, notwithstanding his great desire to possess them, that the jewels were beyond his reach. His wealth was insufficient to purchase them.

"Alas! alas!" he almost moaned, "I am but a small dealer of the market place. As yet the Lord hath not given me of His abundance. I have not gold enough to buy these beautiful stones." He added, with a sigh: "They are beautiful enough to adorn the High Priest's breastplate!"

"I thought that in thee I should find a purchaser," said the traveler, who could not keep his disappointment from the tones of his voice.

"Thou dost not regret it more than I. I would give many years of my life to be the owner of so much treasure."

"Perhaps thou canst guide me to a wealthier dealer than thou art?"

"That can I. I will show thee a larger mart than mine. Whence comest thou?" he asked, as if suddenly attacked by some strong suspicion.

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"From near Jericho," answered the other, somewhat evasively.

"And yet, friend, thou didst enter the city from the opposite side to Jericho! How is that?"

"I came not directly from Jericho. It is but now I came from Caesarea, and am on my way to my home."

The merchant gave the would-be seller of diamonds a long, searching look. Much as he desired to be the owner of the diamonds—and this wish had prompted the idea of going to the money lenders for the requisite sum—his desire was counterbalanced by the fear he had of the Sanhedrim and the Roman law. In the event that these jewels were stolen, he imagined he had already in some way become implicated. Had not this man been seen to enter his mart by all the other merchants at the city gate!

"If I thought—how am I to know—what guarantee—" he began in broken sentences by reason of the different thoughts that crowded into his mind. The traveler appeared to be prepared for such an emergency.

"By the Shekinah, goldsmith, I tell thee that I came by these fairly. They are not mine. I am but commissioned to dispose of them."

The merchant's suspicions seemed allayed, at least in a measure.

"Then thou wilt not object to give thy name, in case the officers of the law should come to my house to make inquiries."

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"Eliziel."

"Of Jericho, thou sayest?"

"Within a Sabbath day's journey to the north of Jericho. I am a husbandman—a tiller of the soil. This is new and strange work for me, who would rather be with my plow and oxen in the fields. This would be my occupation now had I not promised a dying neighbor I would dispose of his treasure and with the gold secured redeem his two sons who have been sold into slavery for their debts. Canst thou take me to a richer merchant than thyself?"

The explanation, although not entirely convincing, appeared partly to satisfy the merchant, who was now anxious to get rid of the stranger.

"Thy story, it seemeth, doth bear the marks of truth. I will take thee to a wealthier man than I, but if——"

He paused. His doubts appeared to return. A change came over his face. He shook his head and his hair seemed to bristle. His long nose was more like the beak of a bird than before, as he craned his neck forward. His fingers, working excitedly, looked like claws. There was a latent vengeance in his eyes.

Why this sudden change? He had thought of his Deborah and her young ones at home. Harm to his loved ones through danger to himself might come from this man's visit. He continued:

"If evil come to me or mine through this my

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dealing with thee—if my wife or the olive branches around about my table should reap aught of evil through thee, or thy visit here today, know that my vengeance shall follow and reach thee if thou remainest above ground—aye, and even after thou shalt be gathered to thy fathers."

For one moment the wayfarer turned pale under the imprecation. Immediately regaining his assurance, he said:

"So be it done to me if I deceive thee. Come, show me the merchant. What is he called?"

"Siro, the rich silk dealer. He is the wealthiest of our merchant princes. He will buy the jewels, if it is as thou sayest. Come."

The two left the scene of noisy traffic near the western gate. Almost at once they turned to the right from the street leading to the governor's palace at the north of the Temple. Continuing in a southerly direction they passed through a portion of the squalid and low-lying district of the Tyropœon valley which lies between Mount Moria on the northeast and the hill of Sion on the south. By the time they had come quite close to the hill of Ophel, the merchant saw the house of Siro in the distance. Pointing his long, bony finger, he said to the stranger:

"Seest thou yon mart on the shady side of this winding street? There dwells the merchant who perchance may buy thy treasure."

"May the benedictions of the God of Abraham be with thee," said the traveler, as they

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parted. The merchant was a prey to uneasy thoughts, fearful lest he become implicated in any trouble for the part he had already taken.

Upon entering the mart of Siro, Eliziel felt more at his ease. In such a place the sale or purchase of a few jewels would be of common occurrence.

"Peace be to thine house," he said, as he entered.

"The blessings of peace return to thy bosom," responded Lazarus, who chanced to be the first person the stranger met in the mart.

Showing the leather case, and stating his errand, he was invited to enter the divan where Hezir Bar Abbas had been entertained a few weeks before.

Siro, like the less wealthy merchant, was delighted with the size and beauty of the diamonds which Eliziel displayed. His shrewdness saw in them large profits should he succeed in disposing of them to any of the Asmonean princes, or to the high dignitaries of the Temple. His visions of gain made him desire to purchase them.

"Thou carriest a fortune in thy leather pouch," he observed.

"Would that they were mine, good merchant," remarked Eliziel. "I am but fulfilling the dying request of a near friend and neighbor in selling them."

"So?"

"To redeem from captivity a dead father's two sons. A promise to the dead is sacred."

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"Thou speakest wisely. But, good sir, remember thou art a stranger to me. In a matter involving so large a transaction it is customary to give the name of some father in Israel, so that he may account for thy reliability."

"This I have foreseen," answered Eliziel. "Thou mayest inquire of Abbas of Jericho, the father of Hezir, with whom thou art doubtless acquainted."

"Enough," said Siro. "It is many years since I first knew the father of Hezir, although I saw not the younger man until a few days ago."

"Wilt thou send to Jericho to inquire of Abbas?"

"Nay, it is enough. Through a mutual friend, Israel Ben Addai, I know he is a worthy man—may the Lord increase his substance and send him length of days."

The dealer brought forward a pair of fine scales. Dexterously removing the jewels from their setting, he weighed them, examining them one by one. When the examination was completed a sum of gold was offered for them. The amount was much larger than Eliziel expected. He started in excitement, which Siro mistook for an objection to the price offered.

"I can pay no more, good friend, for these thy jewels. Thou wouldst not receive a drachma more either in Rome or in Alexandria."

"I was thinking of the happy ransom of my friend's children," Eliziel replied evasively.

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"Art thou content with my offer then?"

"Yea, it seemeth generous enough. I am content."

The gold pieces—a goodly number—were counted out to the seller.

"Art thou not afraid to travel, even the short distance to Jericho, in these times and unattended, with so much treasure?" inquired Siro.

"Nay, good merchant, if thou wilt but sell me a coarse traveling cloth of the poor, I shall then not look like one overburdened with too much wealth."

A sale was soon effected. When again on the streets Eliziel appeared to know the city well. Without hesitation he proceeded to the Tyropœon valley, and entered an unpretentious house in an obscure street. An observer would have judged that he was well acquainted there, for without delay he ascended two flights of stairs. Knocking at a low door, and giving a concerted signal to the servitor whose face appeared behind the grating, he was at once admitted. Passing through a dark hallway, he entered a room where, seated at the farther end, was Hezir Bar Abbas.

"Hast thou been successful?" asked Bar Abbas.

"My captain, beyond expectations. See! the diamonds are converted into coins of gold."

"Who purchased the jewels of thee, Eliziel?"

"Thine acquaintance of recent date. He of the well-filled chests, whose wealth shall one day help our cause."

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"Didst thou see the inside of the strong box?"

"Even so. It is filled to the lid. This goodly sum which shall so help our plans, when removed from his hoard seemed scarce to diminish it," said Eliziel, taking up the leather sack in which Siro had placed the money, and weighing it.

"Good, indeed! Thou hast done good work to-day, Eliziel. Our cause prospers. Canst think of a plan to gain the treasure of this wealthy merchant?"

Eliziel meanwhile was divesting himself of his brown outer garment. Having performed his ablutions he assumed a tunic of yellow silk, held in place by a broad crimson sash. A pale blue turban adorned his head, setting off his black hair and beard to advantage, and giving him the appearance of a Jew who belonged to the upper class.

He took time before answering Hezir's question, so that the latter grew impatient.

"Hast thou advice to offer?"

"None at present, my captain. The Talmud teaches: 'Until one is forty eating is more advantageous than drinking. After that the rule is reversed.' Now, good Hezir, I have not arrived at forty yet, and as I have walked much to-day I am hungry. Let us partake of a meal, and after we are refreshed we may think of a plan to secure old Siro's treasure. If we succeed in this attempt I shall be sorry for one thing."

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"What is that?" asked Hezir quickly and suspiciously.

"For Lazarus."

Hezir Bar Abbas laughed cynically.

"And not for Siro! Thou dost gabble as a toothless woman. Let Lazarus join our enterprise."

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CHAPTER VI

BEFORE THE SANHEDRIM

ELIZIEL was completely enthralled by Hezir Bar Abbas, and had offered him personal service, believing thereby he was forwarding the cause of his country. This follower was much in earnest. Possessor of many fields in the neighborhood of Caesarea and the owner of a number of houses in that luxurious and immoral city—the summer residence of Caesar's representative—many a time he had ground his teeth in impotent rage when forced to undergo one or other of those exactions which helped to replenish the imperial coffers, or to rebuild some ruined Roman spendthrift's fortune. Rome often dealt kindly with the sons of her patricians.

Eliziel fully believed that Hezir Bar Abbas was destined to be the leader of a formidable uprising. Desire for revenge, as well as national pride, made him eagerly embrace any opportunity that might arise to throw off the subjection under which his nation groaned. It was small wonder, then, that he readily and ardently allied himself to a man of such apparent promise as Bar Abbas. He followed him with a devotion worthy of the highest cause, and saw in Hezir the destined Jewish liberator.

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Nor was this devotion merely of sentiment. We have an instance of its earnestness in his assuming the disguise of a poor husbandman for the purpose of disposing of the jewels at his chieftain's desire. As a foot-traveler he had placed himself in real danger, for a solitary individual on nearly all the roads of Judea carried his life in his hands. At any moment he might have been waylaid, robbed of his treasure and left for dead on the roadside, or actually murdered had an attack been made when not within easy call of the soldier patrol.

The meal of which the two partook, while it refreshed the body, did not appear to stimulate Hezir's follower into forming any plan by which a probably successful raid could be made on Siro's oaken chest. Perhaps he was too physically weary for much thinking. He had taken the road to Jericho and had then followed a mere bridle-path westward across a hilly country until he came to the northern road which ran near the Mount of Olives. He then proceeded farther west and finally entered the city, as we have seen, by the northwestern gate. The journey was of no inconsiderable length for one traveling on foot.

Eliziel, a naturally upright man, had persuaded himself that the forcible seizure of Siro's treasure-chest would be a justifiable act in view of the urgent need of funds, which Hezir Bar Abbas repeatedly assured him were necessary for the proper organization of his followers. Bar Abbas was fully aware of but

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the few score of men who at this time were ready to follow him, while his companion was under the impression that they could be numbered by thousands, all eagerly awaiting the word from their leader to rush to arms. Frequently, in his ardor, he had urged Bar Abbas to bring the men together and at once strike the blow for liberty. To this subject he reverted again as soon as his hunger had been appeased.

"Why not gather together the warriors of Israel?" he asked, with flashing eyes. "In thousands of homes throughout Judea and Galilee, as thou hast often told me, O Hezir, there are strong arms to fight, and willing hearts in Israel's cause awaiting thy signal."

"The time is not yet ripe for a decisive movement, good Eliziel," answered the other, with feigned regret. "Busy as the Roman soldiers are at present in collecting this imperial tax, thinkest thou they would not at once leave their unsoldierly task at the first sound of alarm?"

"But," urged Eliziel, "they are even now dispersed through all Judea and Samaria and Galilee—may they find their bed in Hinnom! If we take the decisive step now, we may capture and hold Jerusalem and the near towns. To secure the Holy City were a glorious feat of arms."

Hezir Bar Abbas smiled at the young man's enthusiasm.

"We could not feed five thousand men a week with the funds which are, as yet, at our com-

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mand," he answered. "Nothing but some great contributions will enable us to gather men under arms."

Eliziel was restless. He thought silently for some minutes.

"Convinced as I am of the righteousness and justice of our cause," he said at length, "I will go to one in whom I have great confidence. I will unfold to him our plans. Should he be induced to look upon them with favor, we shall be able to secure all the money we need."

In the enthusiasm of this newly-born idea Eliziel arose, buckled on a sword, and threw over his shoulders a quasi-military grey cloak, for the purpose of disguise.

"Whither goest thou, and to whom wouldst thou risk the unfolding of our secrets?" asked Bar Abbas.

By this time the impulsive Eliziel was outside the door of their rendezvous. While traversing the dark hallway, he called back:

"To Zadok, the priest. He hath immense wealth. I will see him after the evening sacrifice. Expect my return by the second watch of the night."

Hezir Bar Abbas gave a low, cynical laugh. He was convinced that Eliziel's mission would be futile. Zadok was one of the most grasping of the priestly coterie. Eliziel would accomplish nothing. It would amount to this, that at some time in the future—when he could use Eliziel profitably no longer—the enthusiast would be found in the coils of the Sanhedrim,

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with this same Zadok as principal witness to his seditious designs.

He lay back on his cushions and laughed again. In a few minutes he arose and went to the table upon which, under a particolored scarf, lay the golden treasure which Eliziel had brought. The bag was of goodly weight, requiring strong muscles to hold it out at arm's length. Hezir looked at it lovingly.

"A few more like thee," he said, "and good-bye to this wretched and oppressed land. Half a dozen of such bags of coin, and then for Athens! There I would live in luxury. Oh! if Siro's wealth—ah! Pathira!"

He hastily covered the treasure with the scarf and then clapped his hands. A dark-browed menial answered the summons.

"Hath Pathira, the Egyptian, arrived?"

"Aye, my master, he hath been awaiting thy pleasure below this hour past."

"Bid him come."

A moment later the door was again opened. The trembling Pathira stood before the man whom, with superstitious dread, he regarded as the mightiest person he had ever known. After an obeisance, he waited with arms folded across his breast. Bar Abbas saw that he was feared. He knew this was not from lack of personal bravery on the part of the Egyptian, but owing to the superstition with which the latter had been imbued. He was determined that this native of Cairo should be the chief instrument by which he was to secure Siro's gold, and he

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resolved to use him as a foil for his own safety should the attempt prove unsuccessful.

"Is the jewel case of Siro in the same place?"

The Egyptian trembled, unable for a few seconds to utter a sound.

"My lord, it is—gone. I lifted the tapestry this afternoon and found that the master had removed it to some other place."

"Where?"

"I know not."

"If thou wishest to see thy Nigrita alive again, discover the place and inform me."

"O master, I can not do this thing. Release to me, I pray thee, my wife—my poor, unoffending Nigrita, and let us depart to our own country. Hast thou no pity? Wast thou never a father? Think of my little ones, pining for their mother in Cairo! O master, whom Path hath sent to fill my life with trouble, release me, and let me depart!"

"Dog of an Egyptian! what care I for thy children? The fates have sent thee to do my will. Find where the jewel coffer is placed, and thou seest thy Nigrita to-morrow. Secure for me the keys of the oaken chest and provide an entrance to the mart, and thou and thy wife may start the same night for the banks of the Nile."

"Oh, sir, thy task is cruel! Siro is a good master and I have learned to love him. Should I do this wicked thing, I would have to work alone. Why should I injure one so kind to me? And Lazarus—ah, me! How can I in-

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jure him? He treateth me as a brother. Already he hath begun to instruct me in the writings of his seers. Thou believest as Lazarus does. Thou art a Jew. Can thy God permit that thou force me to this crime? I have never injured thee. Look, master, some strange fate hath put me in thy power. Propitiate the fates and let me go with my Nigrita back to my little garden of cucumbers by the Nile. I will never betray thee. Let me go, I pray thee, and live in peace. I pine for my wife. My heart is dead!"

"Betray!" said Bar Abbas, either in feigned or real anger, his black eyes transfixing the pleading man before him, "hast thou thought of that! Did I believe so I would plunge this dagger in thy heart ere thou couldst leave this room. Thou darest not betray! Thy fate is to serve me. Go! Do as I bid thee, and look well to it that thou bringest me good news by tomorrow night, or it shall go hard with thee."

Pathira dropped on his knees before the supposedly angry Jew. He was still trembling, and yet he seemed by the very desperation of his plight to gain a kind of courage.

"Master," he cried, "end this misery which the angry fates have sent me. Take my life now. Although my body, in this strange land, should never be embalmed so that my soul should reach its resting-place, 'twere better to wander in the nether world forever than bear this torture here. Kill me now!"

Compliance with this rather startling re-

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quest was far from the intention of Hezir Bar Abbas. He had work for the Egyptian, and his death would be a decided loss to him.

"Go," he said, "I kill not men in cold blood. Bring me the knowledge and the keys, and all may be well with thee."

With the desperation of a man goaded beyond endurance, Pathira's hand touched the handle of his dagger. He appeared as if he were about to make a panther-like spring upon his oppressor. His muscles tightened along his arms and across his chest. The veins in his forehead stood out clearly beneath his dark skin. His eyes glittered ominously.

Hezir Bar Abbas saw his danger. The man before him was muscular and might prove much stronger than he was himself. He did not seize a sword, although a Damascus blade was lying on the table within reach of his hand, but with blazing, coal-black eyes he held the poor slave, much as birds are said to be fascinated by certain kinds of snakes. For many moments he gazed into the eyes of the kneeling figure.

After a considerable time the Egyptian's muscles relaxed. His hands dropped to his sides; his whole body became limp. The paroxysm was over, and he appeared to be again under the influence of the magnetic gaze of the stronger nature.

Pathira arose. The two stood face to face for some moments, neither moving nor seeming to breathe. When Bar Abbas felt con-

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vinced that he had completely reasserted his influence over the man before him, he slowly raised his hand, and pointing to the door, said:

"Go, and when thy evil thoughts have departed from thy mind, come and obtain the pardon thou deservest not."

The man thus addressed began to retreat backwards, unable to escape from the influence of those dark eyes which were still upon him. As one in a dream, stumbling over pieces of furniture, he at last reached the door and vanished from Hezir's sight.

When the victim of the Jew's cunning had gone, the latter closed the door and barred it. He fell back on his cushions with that sense of satisfaction which comes from the relief of imminent danger safely passed.

"So! so!" he murmured to himself, "I may go too far, even with that dark-skinned son of the Nile. I must be careful. A bow bent too much breaks at last. Well, as he did not attack me, he will now do my bidding for some time to come in order to secure my pardon. I shall know by to-morrow what chances there are for a successful raid on old Siro's treasure-chest."

The morrow came, however, and two others followed, and no Pathira appeared at the house which Bar Abbas occupied. In the meantime, some most untoward things were happening at Siro's bazaar.

Never in all the honorable career of the silk-merchant had so great a misfortune occurred. On the day following the purchase of the

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jewels from Eliziel, Siro and his assistants were thrown into the greatest consternation by the coming into the bazaar of three or four officers of the Sanhedrim. Under the power of this Jewish civil high court the officers claimed authority to search the premises for property reported to the Sanhedrim as stolen. The officer of the band intimated in unmistakable terms that Siro was suspected of having received stolen goods.

In vain did the venerable merchant assure the officer that nothing of the kind had been received by him. Certain of his innocence, and that they would not find anything the possession of which could in the least tarnish his good name, he willingly permitted the envoys of the Sanhedrim to search everywhere and examine everything. Lazarus conducted the officers through the great storehouse of his father. Every corner and table and shelf was carefully examined.

"Tell me, good sir," said Lazarus, "as thou comest by the authority of the Sanhedrim—which to disobey were a sin—tell me the nature of the goods which have been unjustly taken. Seest thou not that my father is much worried—look! look! he has fallen!"

Lazarus rushed to the divan where his father had sunk down on the cushions in an insensible condition. His face had become purple. He appeared to be suffocating. The excitement, and the vexation arising from the visit of the officers of the law, had caused a

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rush of blood to the head, producing an attack of vertigo.

"Send one of your men, I beg of you," said Lazarus, as he snatched up a brazen ewer, "send one of your men to the fountain in the street for water. Search, sir, the remaining portion of the bazaar as you please. I go to attend my father."

Siro recovered in a few minutes. Lazarus was much relieved, for he thought his father was about to die.

"I pledge thee my good name," said the aged man, as soon as he could speak again, "that there is nothing in my mart that I have not come by honestly. 'Sixty iron mines,' saith the Talmud, 'are suspended in the sting of a gnat, but to be robbed of one's good name is more than the sting of a thousand gnats.' Thou hast not even declared the nature of the stolen goods," he added, somewhat testily.

"Show me thy coffer of precious stones, for I hear thou dealest in gems," said the officer, who did not appear to be altogether uninfluenced by the merchant's evident distress.

"Ah!" exclaimed Siro, involuntarily, a sudden suspicion coming to him. The remembrance of the purchase of the diamonds from the traveler flashed across his mind. What if they had been stolen, and the thief, making use of Siro's reliance on the honesty of Bar Abbas' father, had made use of that name to ward off suspicion! The officer watched him closely after the exclamation.

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"It seems to me that thou art not so anxious to display thy jewels as to show thy hoards of silk, thy linens, and thy rugs. Come, old man, where is the casket?"

Siro, his suspicions increasing, arose and with trembling hand, drew aside a panel in the wall of the divan.

"There! there are the jewels! They are all mine. Caesar himself hath not the right to take them from me."

The officer laughed.

"That may be, but thou wilt scarce question the right of the High Priest and the Sanhedrim."

Siro unlocked the casket. On the top of the precious treasure lay the small bundle of snow-white wool, whereon rested the diamonds of his recent purchase.

"At last!" exclaimed the representative of the Sanhedrim. The bleached wool and the number of gems tallied with the instructions he had received.

"It is as reported. Thou, with these stones, must be taken before the judges of the Sanhedrim. I will leave an officer in charge of thy wares. Come."

The impatient official barely allowed Siro time to lock and put the casket back into the secret niche. Siro walked along the familiar streets in company with the men as one in a dream. So suddenly had this disgrace come upon him that at first he scarcely realized the extent of the misfortune which he was con-

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vinced threatened to cloud his fair name—a name that it was his pride to know was held among the highest for integrity in Rome and in Ephesus, in Antioch and in Alexandria.

Being a successful merchant, Siro had many rivals in other cities. These, he feared, would be only too willing to believe all evil things said of him and spread the report of the damage his fair name had received. He realized, with a sinking of the heart, how difficult it would be to counteract and live down the evil rumors which would now go abroad. The mind works rapidly under the first stress of disaster. Being almost supersensitive as to his reputation, it was with a sickening dread he looked forward into the years and realized the difficulty of casting off the odium which he was convinced must attach to his name from such a charge.

He anticipated little difficulty in exonerating himself of all charges before the civil court of the Sanhedrim. Shrewd and keen as he was known to be in making a bargain, yet the faintest breath of suspicion had never, until this moment, touched his integrity.

The members of the Great Council of the Jews regulated and administered the religious laws. They also possessed almost plenary authority in civil matters. Rome granted the conquered provinces political autonomy and the administration of their own laws, reserving to herself the question of life and death. This, and matters concerning the integrity of the

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Empire, the conquerors took into their own hands. Open violence, as endangering the latter, was punished by the Roman officials; civil infractions of law were relegated to the Sanhedrim. Siro was sure that, when he had stated to the judges how he had purchased the jewels, the precautions he had taken and the references he had demanded, he would be dismissed at once.

He was much mistaken. He was to learn that many of the judges were venal. When, in the progress of the investigation, he found that Eliziel's reference to the father of Bar Abbas by no means aided his case, he was greatly surprised. He discovered that the elder Abbas and his son Hezir had long been objects of much suspicion, both to the High Priest and Sanhedrim, and to the Roman procurator.

He learned that the jewels had been unlawfully obtained, although not by violence. They belonged to one Omri, a resident of Antioch. This young man, chafing under the restraints of home, had taken his share and left his father's house. He had squandered money as lavishly as a Roman senator. With the exception of these jewels, his patrimony had soon disappeared. Of these he had recently been robbed while staying at an inn in Jerusalem. Having reported the loss to the chief priest, the investigation had been ordered which resulted in Siro's arrest.

Who the thief was the judges were anxious to discover. The name of Eliziel was new to

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them. No one knew aught of him. Omri appeared before the Sanhedrim, which ordered Siro to return the valuables to him. This young man had no charge to bring against the merchant, of whose honesty he was convinced. Having secured his treasure, he disappeared that night from Jerusalem. The judges, thinking that Omri would appear with witnesses to prosecute Siro on the morrow, adjourned further investigation until the following day. Siro was horrified to learn that he was destined to spend one night, at least, in the cell of a dark and ill-smelling dungeon.

Pathira was dispatched to Bethany to inform Martha and Mary of the untoward events. The Egyptian's devotion to Siro and his family caused him to forget completely the task which Hezir Bar Abbas had imposed upon him. Lazarus could not be induced to leave his father. By means of a considerable bribe, he persuaded the guard to allow him to remain at his side all night.

When Eliziel returned from the interview with Zadok, he was in exceedingly bad humor. He was not much known in Jerusalem, but those who were acquainted with the handsome young enthusiast liked him well and sympathized with him. One of these well-wishers saw him on the street as he was returning from Zadok's house.

"Why those dark and gloomy looks, Eliziel?" he asked, pulling his sleeve as he spoke.

"Because our great ones are false. There is

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no more nobility of spirit among those who should be our leaders. Even our priests are sordid."

"Hist! speak not so loud," cautioned his friend. "There may be listeners behind every door. Let me tell thee, for thine own safety, thou art suspected both by the governor and by the High Priest. If thou art taken, contrive to fall into the hands of the governor rather than into those of the priests, unless thou desirest to become a plucked crow. Cruel as is the one, he has some sense of justice; with others——"

The speaker put his finger to his lips. With a kindly nod of the head, he turned down a side street and was at once lost to sight in the gathering darkness.

A few minutes later Eliziel flung his sword on the table in Hezir's room, which was in reality a hiding-place for both of them.

"Thy mission to Zadok? How fared it?" asked the gold-seeker.

"I told him all. He listened with interest, as I supposed. When I asked him for his moral support, and to make known our cause to the priests of the Temple who could give us financial aid, he—he——"

Eliziel paused as his anger rose.

"What did he?"

"He raised his shoulders, threw out the palms of his hands—so—and refused absolutely."

Hezir Bar Abbas indulged in a sinister smile.

"Thou mightest have expected that."

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CHAPTER VII

ROSE-CROWNED

THE mysterious warning spoken to Eliziel on the street caused him much uneasiness. He pondered that night for a long time over his position. He concluded that if his patriotism —high and unselfish as he knew it to be—was reason for suspicions among his own people he would leave Jerusalem; he would seek a place of safety where, in retirement, he could watch events and act when he judged the time propitious. He therefore disappeared, without even telling Hezir Bar Abbas where he could be communicated with should his presence be required.

Siro was discharged on the day following his arrest. As Omri did not again appear, the merchant's good reputation, which was known to most of the seventy-one members of the Sanhedrim, saved him from further inconvenience and annoyance. This same Sanhedrim had formerly appointed him as one among the twenty-three members of the lesser, or local, Sanhedrim of Bethany. Every one assured him that there was no stain on his character nor disgrace attached to his name, yet he was morbidly alive to the dishonor to which he had been subjected. He never fully recovered from the chagrin of this indignity. His absorbing

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desire for the rest of his life was to discover Eliziel and to bring him to justice. He continued to go to and from Bethany to the city. At the end of about three years from the time of arrest his vigor began to decline. When Lazarus was nineteen, Siro became so enfeebled that he rarely traveled into Jerusalem, leaving his son to conduct the business of the mart.

One day during the first summer Lazarus had charge of the bazaar, a messenger came from Magdala bringing a letter from Siro's steward, saying that many depredations were being made in the vineyards and rose-gardens of the merchant's northern estate.

Siro decided to send Lazarus for the purpose of making an investigation, with authority to punish the evil-doers. The young man was dispatched with a numerous retinue of servants and slaves to afford him a safe escort and assist in chastising those who had done injury to the property, if after sufficient investigation, the conditions were found such as the steward had represented.

It was on this journey that Lazarus met with an experience which influenced the whole course of his life. It occurred as he was passing through Nazareth. It was evening. The setting sun dipped gloriously into the Mediterranean behind Mount Carmel, crowning its hoary summit with gold. The slopes of this mountain of the prophets, and also Mount Tabor, were already tinged with evening's

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purple shades when Lazarus and his little band halted at the only khan in the village of Nazareth. In many hamlets among the valleys of this hilly country the darkness was already gathering, but from the elevated plateau on which Nazareth stands the quiet, simple folk could see in the distance, across the Valley of Jezreel, an expanse of the great sea beyond, all ablaze in the evening's golden glory. Close at hand, myriads of bright-hued insects made the summer haze vocal with the motion of their untiring wings.

To Lazarus and his company, the white-walled houses of Nazareth appeared pink in the evening sun. The red pomegranates blossoming in the gardens grew more brilliant as they caught the slanting rays, presenting to the eye the appearance of many brilliant orbs of fire. The beauty of these flowers and their companion roses was heightened by the dark background of olive and palm trees which covered the valleys and portions of the lower neighboring hills.

All was motionless in the evening air. No sound was heard save the hum of the insects, the softened tinkling of the distant sheep-bell or the occasional peal of merry laughter from some happy boys who were at play in the open space in the center of the town.

The toilers of Nazareth were resting from the labors of the day. Many sat before their doors enjoying the cool breeze which came up at nightfall from the sea. Lithe, tall maidens,

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carrying water-pots on their heads—a practice by which they acquired a wonderful grace of pose and movement—noiselessly passed on their way to or from the common well of the place. With these exceptions there was no sign of animation on the street. To the ordinary observer, nothing had occurred that day to cause even a ripple of disturbance in the usual quiet of the place.

In two houses, however, of this peaceful town, there was more than ordinary activity, arising from the pleasant duties of hospitality. Simple and lowly, and even despised, as these Nazarenes were, yet they were remarkable throughout all Galilee for the warmth of welcome they invariably extended to their guests, as well as for the willingness with which they entertained strangers who chanced to come among them.

This cordiality was being manifested in no small degree in a dwelling that stood a little apart from the cluster of buildings forming the town. It was a small, humble house, having only a few rooms. Around it could be seen the marks of toil—shavings and pieces of wood, indicating that the occupant was a worker in wood. It was the home of Joseph the carpenter.

All labor had been laid aside early in the day. Joseph and Mary were making comfortable and attending to the wants of two guests who had honored their dwelling. No less a personage than a priest of the Temple in Jeru-

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salem was Joseph's guest. For venerable Zachary, with his wife Elizabeth, had come on a visit of charity to Mary and Joseph. Old as both were, they had traveled a distance of nearly seventy miles through the hill country of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee to see once more, ere they were both laid away in the tomb, that wonderful child whom Elizabeth knew of old, and whom Zachary, three years before, had seen disputing with such marvelous wisdom among the learned men of Israel in the Temple porch. The memory of that event had remained with Zachary. It had become part of his life. It was ever present with him in his waking hours and filled his dreams at night. He ardently longed, ere he laid down the burden of life, to see the wonderful boy and know more of him in whom he was fain to recognize the Messias of the prophets.

Joseph, according to the custom of the East, had brought water for the old priest's feet, and in spite of his guest's earnest protestations had washed them himself. Now the two men were sitting outside the house engaged in earnest, quiet conversation. Mary was entertaining Elizabeth in a no less kindly manner within doors.

In another house, not a stone's throw away, other scenes of hospitality were also being enacted. That afternoon, Zebedee, from the little fishing town of Bethsaida, had brought his wife Salome, with their two sons, James and John, on a visit to Geddiel Sodi, who was a

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relative of Zebedee's wife. The host in this case was a wealthy farmer who owned more flocks and herds than any one else in the region round about Nazareth.

Sodi's household consisted of Miriam, his wife, and three young sons, Subael, Abner, and Ezri, together with numerous men and maid servants. A more sumptuous meal had been prepared for these visitors than that offered to Zachary and Elizabeth. A lamb had been killed. Purple and pale grapes, apples and pears graced the board. The master of the house had ceased to be a strict Nazarene, and therefore did not hesitate to place on his table wines cooled in snow which had been preserved in huge boxes underground. Zebedee and Salome were conscious of being slightly patronized, but James and John enjoyed the feast set before them as only boys can who usually fared less sumptuously.

James was nearly sixteen, and two years older than his brother. Both were learning the trade of their father, who was a fisherman on the Lake of Tiberias. Their browned faces and hands told of living much in the open air. Their hair was long, after the fashion of the men of their nation. Geddiel Sodi's three sons affected the Roman custom of cutting the hair short, after their father's example, whose action with regard to this and the use of wine gave the simple Nazarene townsmen much cause for sorrow. They deplored the fact that Sodi had departed from the traditions of their fore-

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fathers and had ceased to be a strict follower of their sect.

When the meal was finished, the five boys went out to the open plateau where most of the town children were accustomed to gather on summer evenings. This merry company was watched with interest by Lazarus from the gate of the khan where he was sojourning for the night. The shouts of these children could be heard on the hillside where Zachary and Joseph were conversing.

The two men had been enjoying each other's company for some time when Zachary suddenly started at the beautiful vision before him.

Standing under the arch of the doorway, with the softened light of evening falling upon him, was a youth of most marvelous beauty, apparently about fifteen years of age. He had just returned from an errand upon which Joseph had sent him before the unexpected arrival of the guests.

His gold-brown hair was parted in the center, falling in long, silky waves to the shoulders. The high, white forehead shone in the evening light as polished marble. The large, mild, but penetrating eyes were overarched with full eyebrows, helping to enhance the brilliancy of eyes which spoke meekness, ardor, and love. The lips were exquisitely formed and colored with the redness of health. The chin was molded to the perfect masculine grace of early manhood; the partially exposed neck revealed the noble poise of the head.

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The youth wore an outer garment of greyish brown color common to that country. It was woven in one piece and reached nearly to the ground. It fitted the figure and was held in place by a girdle at the waist.

At the moment Zachary first observed the beautiful youth there was a glow on his countenance which lighted up all the features. The last traces of tears—not of sadness, but of devotion—lay on the lashes of those wonderful eyes.

The Nazarene mothers—the fame of whose beauty and comeliness had reached even distant Rome—admitted that the son of the carpenter Joseph surpassed all other youths, and conceded to him a winning grace they failed to find in their own children. At this moment he seemed more beautiful than ever, for the usually calm face was lighted up with the pleasurable emotions which the visit of Elizabeth and Zachary had occasioned.

The youth advanced and silently stood behind Joseph's seat, his arms lightly folded over his breast, in an attitude of deepest respect toward the two men. The old Levite was awed; his whole being thrilled. Trembling with rapture, he arose, and was about to prostrate himself and kiss the feet of the beautiful child. He was one of the few in all the world who knew who he was who stood before him.

He was prevented from kneeling by the youth taking his hand as he was about to sink on his knees, and thus, in a half-stooping, half-

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kneeling, but wholly reverential attitude, he kissed the divine Child's hand, exclaiming passionately as he did so:

"My Lord and my God!"

He was then led to his seat by the youth, who said, with wonderful dignity:

"Blessed are they who know the things thou knowest."

Having performed this kindly office to the guest, he once more assumed the attitude of modest expectancy on Joseph's will. The foster-father, who had risen when Zachary arose, now sat down. Once before he had seen this calm dignity exhibit itself in the wonderful youth. That was three years ago in the Temple, when he had said to his mother: "Wist ye not that I must be about my father's business?"

Joseph, realizing that as the head of the family he represented the source of all authority, called the youth forward and said to him:

"The children of Zebedee of Bethsaida are on yonder plateau. Lest we should appear wanting in hospitality, go and bid them welcome."

With a slight inclination of the head, the command was obeyed with alacrity. Zachary watched him depart. With the glow of exalted enthusiasm still on him, he exclaimed:

"O Israel! O Nazareth! If thou didst but know! If thou didst but know!"

"Good master," said Joseph, "his time is not yet come," and added, with mournful, prophetic

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pathos, "nor shalt thou nor I behold the mighty works he yet shall do. Our years will end before his work begins."

The children on the plateau had been playing a game of war—a popular pastime of Jewish boys of that period—which indicated, as most sports of children do, the trend of national thought and desire. Sides were chosen and Hebrews were ranged against Romans. The game invariably ended with the defeat of the Romans and the triumphant re-establishment of Jewish independence by choosing a king and crowning him with myrtle or roses amid the plaudits of all.

"Whom shall we crown king?" asked Micha, the son of Oziel, who was a neighbor of Joseph, as the mock contest was ended.

"A king! a king!" shouted several of the children in chorus. Their noise and laughter interested Lazarus, who came from his sojourning place to the spot where the children were playing in order to be a closer witness of the end of the game.

"We want no king," exclaimed Subael, the eldest of Sodi's sons. He had, this evening, been the leader of the Romans. "We want no king. Caesar is our king!"

"Shame! shame!" said Micha, from among the group. "Even in our games you object to our being free. Would that the real deliverer would come! My father says that this is the time for the great conqueror to come and free Israel."

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Abner sided with his brother Subael. It appeared that, for once, the game would have an unusual ending; but Micha persisted:

"A king! a king! we must have a king!"

At that moment Jesus appeared at the outer edge of the plateau. Micha, catching sight of him as he was approaching, exclaimed:

"See! see! here comes the son of Mary. He shall be our king!"

The group of handsome Jewish youths turned to look at the approaching figure. Lazarus, although he had not joined the company of boys, was now so close that he could see and hear everything. There was a quiet dignity in the advancing youth which silenced the noisiest among the boys for a moment. Somewhat slowly, he walked up to the little gathering. Looking at John and James with a grave, sweet smile of welcome, he said:

"I bid you welcome to Nazareth."

James, greatly affected, unconsciously bowed low as he would have done to some prince, or as he did to the High Priest, whom he had once seen in Jerusalem when his father had taken him to the Paschal ceremonies.

It was different with John. He stood transfixed and motionless. His eyes were riveted on that serene face. He seemed as if he never could sufficiently drink in its beauty. His color came and went. A strange new life seemed coursing through his veins. With unspeakable ardor he stepped toward the youth, and with an almost unconscious movement laid his head

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lightly on the shoulder of Jesus, saying in a low tone, unheard by the others:

"Thou art indeed our king, and, oh, my heart goes out in love to thee!"

John was almost fainting under the sudden impulse of intense love. His heart beat rapidly; his temples throbbed. The whole ardor of his strong nature was stirred by this wonderful youth whom he saw for the first time. So strongly was this son of the fisherman influenced that he would willingly have died then and there for this newly found love. His head rested but for one moment on the other's shoulder, but long enough for the wonderful youth to reply, in the same low tone:

"Thou shalt know me better and love me more."

How Lazarus was affected will be seen in a letter which he afterward wrote to his sister Martha.

The boys of Nazareth were somewhat accustomed to this strange influence which Mary's son frequently exercised. They recovered from it sooner than the visitors. Micha was still intent on a fitting termination of the game. He loudly demanded that a king be chosen. The boys now politely referred the question to the visitors from Bethsaida.

John, who was still under the fascination of his newly-found friend, advanced a step from the side of the wonderful youth and, pointing to him, said with vehemence:

"Crown him! crown him! for he is worthy in

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very deed to be King of the Jews—aye, and of the whole world!"

A faint color tinged the face of the beautiful boy, indicative of the pleasure the speech had given him. John's suggestion met with instant approval. Immediately there was increased animation in the little band. Some brought clusters of roses from trees transplanted from the famous Valley of Sharon; others gathered sprays of myrtle, while busy fingers began to make the flower crown. Two or three brought forward a high seat to be used as a throne for the new king. With laughter and with shouts they compelled the carpenter's son to sit upon the throne, while all, in boyish glee, bowed the knee before him. Then came the great ceremony which closed the evening's pastime.

It was the custom in those simpler times for mothers and fathers to take interest in their children's amusements. On the summer evenings at Nazareth the older people came out from their houses to the plateau to witness the honor the young people paid to the chosen king of the day. This evening Joseph and Mary had invited the aged Zachary and his wife to the open space. Geddiel Sodi had also brought with him his guests from Bethsaida. All watched with amused interest the innocent sports of childhood.

At the moment of the coronation, when the light-hearted children were shouting: "Hail, King of the Jews! Long live our nation's King!" and were bowing the knee to the one

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of their choice, a small band of Roman horse soldiers came in sight on the edge of the level ground forming the plateau. They had come from Tiberias, on the Lake of Genesareth, and were passing through Nazareth on their way to the fortress of Naim, which lies at the foot of Mount Tabor.

Flavius, the captain of a band, perceiving a gathering among the people, and being aware of the frequency of Jewish insurrections, halted his company close to the little gathering. As he did so, the children's "aves" rose clear in the still summer air. To the Nazarenes, this company of soldiers seemed to have swooped down upon them suddenly as ominous birds of prey.

The captain flushed angrily as the words of the children reached his ears. He hastily descended from his horse. The now frightened children, and the villagers, clustered in a group on one side of the throne, while on the other stood the soldiers, motionless, impassive, strong, the personification of relentless power. Mary trembled. She dreaded that insult and indignity would be heaped upon her son by a ribald soldiery; nor were her fears groundless.

"A king! what king? 'Tis thus you teach your children treason even in their games," said the officer, as he angrily faced the older people.

"Nay, sir," quietly responded one of the townsmen, "be not angry. It is mere children's sport. We have no thought of insurrection here in Nazareth."

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"A king! What king? 'Tis thus you teach your children treason even in their games," said the officer, as he angrily faced the older people.—Page 122.

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"That is well, or soon you would feel our swords."

The flower-crowned king had not moved from his chair. The soldier realized the inoffensiveness of the pastime, yet, having come down from his horse with an air of so much importance, he was loth to mount again without letting his subordinates witness some act of authority. He cast a searching glance over the company of boys. Their frightened faces appeared to satisfy him.

Looking toward the one seated on the improvised throne, he saw in him no sign of dismay. The chaplet of roses yet adorned his brow. This angered the rough soldier.

"You, who would be a Jewish Caesar, come here and bring me your crown."

The youth neither moved nor spoke.

"Look you, you Jew! heed you not my command?"

The placid child remained calmly seated; but there were ominous looks of anger on the faces of the children surrounding him.

"Do as I command at once!" angrily shouted the Roman, his breastplate rattling as he stamped his foot.

"Nay, we do no wrong. The pastime is innocent and harmless," was the reply, given in a melodious, but low and penetrating tone.

The officer became angry. The youths surrounding their chosen king were getting demonstrative. Some furtively picked up stones. By their gestures and determined faces it could

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be seen in the gathering darkness that the boys, apparently influenced by a feeling of chivalric loyalty, and now no longer in play or pastime, were determined to defend the one they had chosen to honor. They were too young to realize the danger and the folly of opposing Roman steel. The officer, however, might not have departed without some ugly bruises had not the son of Mary calmed the rising tumult in his companions' breasts by one word:

"Peace."

At the sound of his voice the boys instantly ceased their hostile demonstrations. Evidences of their anger at once died out of their faces. The soldier watched the transformation in silent wonder. He was at a loss to comprehend the influence this boy-king exercised over his companions. Flavius had heard that from early times witches had dwelt at Endor, a town to the south of Nazareth; in his ignorance he believed this was some of their magic art.

"What means this strange power in that youth?" asked the officer of Lazarus, who was near him.

"Sir, I know not. Marvelous it is, indeed. It is as surprising to me as it is to thee."

Amazed as the officer was, his anger had not subsided. Striding rapidly toward the throne, Flavius seized the crown of roses and tore it violently from the boy-king's head. Throwing the flowers on the ground, he trampled them under his feet. Springing to his horse, he then gave a hurried order for departure, the com-

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pany almost instantly disappearing in the gathering gloom.

The rich brown hair of the beautiful youth was disheveled. It had fallen forward over his face, now pale from the indignity he had suffered. Mary clasped him in her arms, saying, in an agony of grief:

"My child! my son! my son!"

His head rested for a moment on her shoulder as a dove nestles in its nest, and as it did so Mary saw across the clear, pure brow a blood-red mark which the thorns of the rose-crown had made.

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CHAPTER VIII

TABLET AND PAPYRUS

"LAZARUS to Martha, the daughter of Siro of Bethany, Greeting:

"May the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lift up the light of His countenance on thee, and may the light of His face shine on thee, and keep thee in all His ways until I return safely unto thee. Amen.

"As the faithful Zamlech is about to depart from me to return to Bethany, I am constrained to write to thee of all my adventures in my journey to our castle at Magdala.

"Reverently kiss my father's hand for me, and tell him that the depredations which were reported to him are not of so serious a nature as the epistle of our steward led him to believe. Much of his alarm must be attributed to his faithfulness and the anxious care with which he administers our father's property. The chief damage has been committed in the rose-fields, of which there are many on the estate. Thou hast often told me of these rosefields, my sister, but this is the first time I have enjoyed so beautiful a sight. The bushes are low, and the fields resemble rich carpets of brilliant colors. The delight caused by the perfume therefrom is almost enough to make one swoon. During the rose harvest a large number of

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people are employed in collecting the petals. Amarias, the faithful steward, thought he detected some pilfering of bags of blossoms, and not being willing to accuse any one without sufficient evidence, he wrote the letter to our father.

"With regard to the damage done to the vineyards, I have learned that many of the young vines have been injured by the foxes, which are abundant in the neighborhood. When I have set our servants to exterminate these pests, which abound in the low hills hereabout, there will be no more cause for uneasiness. Thou must put down the damage wrought, as stated by the steward's letter, to have been very much exaggerated, and thus relieve our dear father's anxiety.

"Tell my honored father I am proud that he should have entrusted so important a mission to one so young in years as I am. The steward treats me with as much respect as he would treat my father were he here. As soon as I have become better acquainted with our possessions, including castle and lands, I will write at greater length to our father, as I know he would have me.

"Now, dearest sister, I must tell thee of a wonderful event I witnessed while I was journeying hither. On my travel northward I passed through the despised village of Nazareth. You know the inhabitants of Jerusalem despise the residents of that place. Arriving there late in the day, I went to the only khan

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and secured accommodation for myself and the servants who accompanied me.

"In the evening, after we had attended to the wants of our horses and had partaken of a needed meal, I was walking along the one street of the village when I was attracted by the merry sound of children's laughter. Several bright, handsome boys were gathered in the open space around the only well in the village. On approaching, I found they were playing some game which all seemed to enjoy.

"By what seemed a preconcerted arrangement the game suddenly ended, and one side was declared victorious. Then a king was to be chosen. There was much disputing with regard to a choice. At one time I thought the disagreement would end in a serious quarrel. It would doubtless have done so had there not appeared on the scene a most wonderful youth, transcending in beauty anything of which I had ever read or thought or dreamed.

"I was standing near the group when he approached. As he came near, I thought there had never appeared on this earth a more lovely form or face. He was a youth of about fifteen or sixteen, and although he was so young, he had the regal port which belongs to royal blood. Indeed, the simple folk of this little town declare that he is a direct descendant of our glorious King David. We are told that David was ruddy and fair in his youth, yet I am sure he could not have been so fair as this beautiful child, the fairest among mortals. I am con-

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vinced that David in his youth never bore himself more majestically. Our Shekinah—the glory of the presence of God among His own people—seemed to surround him.

"All bowed to his will. By one word he calmed the angry tumult of the boys when a company of soldiers suddenly appeared among them and attempted to stop the game they were playing. To me, the leader's part appeared unmanly. Should I see this officer—I learn that his name is Flavius—when I return to Jerusalem, I shall report him to the procurator. He acted unlike a soldier. The Roman rule is hard, yet never was it known that Roman soldiers warred on children.

"But to return to the wonderful child. It seemed to me, my sister, that the passions of men's hearts were softened and molded at his will. He gave me one clear, earnest look as I stood near his companions. I was thrilled through and through! It appeared to me that he gazed deep down into my soul and read its inmost secret thoughts. There arose in me a feeling of the intensest reverential love for him, surpassing the love for my own dear father—aye, even going beyond my affection for the memory of our dead mother, Eucharia. This newly awakened love was accompanied by a keener reverence than I had ever felt before —greater than for the sacred person of our great High Priest. There was an ineffable majesty in his every movement—a kingly condescension, which made me, almost without

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conscious volition, render him my heart's sincerest homage.

"What can all this mean, dearest sister? The strangest circumstance is that this love, which has so filled my being since that one glance into my very soul, has given me a joy and a satisfaction which I have never felt before. I have, as you know, owing to the noble example of our dear father, always endeavored to lead the life of a true child of Abraham, but in spite of all my efforts, the legal observances proper to our religion and the Rabbins' teachings of the Talmud have always appeared to me merely external, leaving the heart partly empty. Now that void is filled by love. My whole being is satisfied. I seem to live. I have thought much since about this strange youth. The more I ponder over that meeting, the more I am convinced that he is some extraordinary person by whom the God of our fathers intends to work marvelous things.

"Can it be, O my sister, that in this obscure Galilean village has been born the promised Messias, and that he is living here in retirement, awaiting the appointed time to gather around him the Jewish fighting men and drive the Romans from our land? Yet I confess he hath not the marks of a warrior, but rather is one who would draw others after him by the sweet cords of love. He can, as I have told thee, move hearts at will. I am convinced that in a few years, when he shall have reached man's estate, if he should so choose, he could

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collect around him a countless host of men and lead them to victory.

"There is one obstacle, however, to my hopes —for hopes I confess them to be; it lies in the fact that, according to our holy books—and thou rememberest the prophecy was found by our doctors of the law when those Persian kings came to Jerusalem some years ago—the Messias was to be born in Bethlehem, and not in Nazareth. I intend to seek knowledge from Gamaliel or Hillel when I return.

"Others were as much or even more affected than I. There were a fisherman's sons among those who were engaged in the pastime I mentioned. Coarsely clad and browned as they were, one of them—John I think they called him—was so overcome by the influence this strange youth exercised over him that I thought more than once he was about to swoon away. His brother, James, much sterner looking, appeared to resist the influence externally, yet I saw him tremble each time the beautiful boy came near him or cast his loving eyes upon him. These two boys are, I am told, the sons of a rough, weather-beaten fisherman of Bethsaida, and are to a certain extent uncouth in their manner. They are the last persons one would expect to be influenced in so wonderful a degree by another of about their own age.

"It is all extraordinary. As regards myself, I know that I am a different being since I looked upon his face. My mind expands. I wish to love all mankind. I would willingly

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devote my life to him and would esteem it an honor to be always in his presence. Since knowing him—and remember, dear Martha, I saw him for only a few minutes, and in the gathering dusk of the evening—since knowing him the world appears to be different. All men are brothers. Love is everything. I am eager to preach this doctrine and do good to all.

"Willingly would I have remained in Nazareth an indefinite time had not my duty and our father's interests urged me to reach Magdala without unnecessary delay. When the business on which my father hath sent me is put in a prosperous way, I intend to make another visit to this humble village among the hills for the purpose of again gazing on the face of this wonderful youth. The sweetness of the attraction he has for me is more delicious to my soul than is honey to the lips.

"One of the Temple priests of last month's course is visiting the father and mother of this child. Doubtless my father knows the aged Zachary. Should he wish for further knowledge of one who I can not but think is the destined Messias of Israel, he may inquire of this Zachary when he returns to the holy city for his priestly functions.

"I had almost forgotten, my loving Martha, to tell thee of the mother of this wonderful boy. Such a beautiful face! yet one on which there appeared marks of indelible sorrow! This, to me, is a great mystery. There shone in her countenance, nevertheless, a calm, ecstatic joy

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which all could see had its source in motherhood and the possession of so remarkable a child. Beneath her air of repose there were marks of grief. Joy and grief were alternately contending for the mastery, each emotion leaving its own imprint on the face.

"Never have I seen such exquisite blending of maidenly modesty and maternal solicitude as when her child was uncouthly used by Flavius, the officer, who pretended to think the little company had come together for seditious purposes. When she clasped her son in her arms there was such a look upon her face as I shall never forget. My eyes filled with tears while witnessing her grief. As she held her son's head to her bosom for a moment, and placed her arms around his shoulders, she seemed to offer him protection against all the world. The beautiful oval face was upturned to heaven. She was undoubtedly addressing a prayer to the God of our fathers. My impression of it was that she was making some reparation to the God of Israel for the insult offered to her son. This thought was, in some way I am at a loss to explain, deeply impressed upon my mind, coming to me by a kind of intuition.

"How and why these things should be I know not. Does she believe that her son is the Messias? To me no Jewish matron is more worthy the honor of being the mother of our deliverer. Is her son the promised one of Israel? Is the Messias to be a divine person,

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or merely a great and successful leader? Oh, would that these questions could be answered and the clouds of obscurity lifted from my mind. Nazareth contains at this moment two of the most wonderful, most marvelous, personages our race has ever known.

"What thinkest thou of it all? Oh, my sister, hadst thou seen what I have seen, thy enthusiasm would have carried thee away, too! It is impossible to see this wonderful—aye, divine—youth and not be transported out of one's self. Thou seest I have called him divine—in my heart I believe he is so, but had not intended to make this declaration until I had learned more; yet having made it, I believe it would be a sin to unsay it.

"Amarias has been to Nazareth. He is as deeply impressed as I. We talk together of this marvelous child and of his scarcely less wonderful mother. How I could wish my dear and reverend father to be here to see for himself! He is so well versed in the Scriptures that I am sure he could point out many prophecies which meet in this youth. I, in my ignorance, am unable to do this. Wilt thou not try, dearest Martha, to induce him to come to his house in Magdala. On the journey he would pass through Nazareth. Wilt thou not induce him to come? It would tend to distract his mind from the sorrow and the annoyance arising from the remembrance of that wretched arrest of three years ago.

"Assure him that his good name stands as

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high in honor here in Magdala as it ever did. It is the same, I am sure, in every place where he is known. In this place, especially, he is held in deepest reverence for his princely benefactions, the extent of which I am discovering daily.

"Give Mary my brotherly love. Kiss my father's hand for me.

"I can not do better than close this epistle with the prayer of the evening synagogue service, which I say daily for you all:

" 'O Lord our God, cause us to lie down in peace, and raise us up again to life. O our King, spread over us the tabernacle of Thy peace; strengthen us before Thee in Thy good council, and deliver us for Thy name's sake. Be Thou our protection round about us; keep us far from the enemy, the pestilence, the sword, famine, and affliction. Keep Satan from before and behind us, and hide us in the shadow of Thy wings; for Thou art a God that helpest and deliverest us; and Thou, O God, art a gracious and merciful king. Keep Thou our going out and our coming in for life and for peace from henceforth and forever!'

"May the God of Israel keep thee."

It was several weeks before Lazarus received news from Bethany. He thought seriously of dispatching one of the servants with a second letter to Martha, asking if her silence were caused by any untoward circumstance. One morning he was about to call for his tablets for this purpose when he heard the sound

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of a horse's hoofs beating along the road in rapid approach toward the castle.

In a few minutes the faithful Zamlech stood before him. He handed his young master a silken bundle, carefully tied and sealed. It contained an epistle from Martha, written not on wax-tablets, as was his method of writing, but on papyrus. He read as follows:

"Martha, to Lazarus, son of Siro, at Magdala: Greeting.

"May our thanks be given to the God of Israel that thou art well. It was a cause of rejoicing to our father when he learned by thy letter that the damages done his estate at Magdala were of small importance. He desires me to request thee to give praise to the steward for his faithfulness in looking so carefully to our interests. He quite approves of thy design for exterminating the foxes in the neighborhood of the vineyards. He requests thee to examine carefully the accounts of Amarias and see that every one receives the just reward of his labors. During the sojourn at the castle of Magdala, it is our father's wish that Amarias discharge or employ no one without first submitting the question to thy judgment. Our father does not mistrust the prudence of the steward, but he wishes this for the sake of respect to his authority, which thou representest.

"And now, Lazarus, I must perforce give thee an explanation of the long delay in sending thee an answer to thy letter. Zamlech, in bring-

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ing it, was not careful enough in keeping the cloths wet around thy waxen tablets, so that, as thy stylus did not make very heavy marks on the wax, the impression was partly obliterated and very difficult to decipher. Wilt thou not write on papyrus for the future? I have sent thee, by our messenger, a supply, together with a horn of atramentum.

"Another reason why I did not write to thee sooner was that I desired to send thee joyful tidings of our loved father. The memory of his arrest has preyed upon his mind most seriously. We can not disabuse him of the idea that he is disgraced. Nicodemus, whom thou well knowest, has sought repeatedly to assure him that there is not the least stain upon his name for that transaction. This, our father's lifelong friend, since thy absence often visits us, sometimes spending the night here.

"The trouble has quite seriously affected our father's health. I fear that ere long he will go the way of all flesh and be gathered to his fathers. Nicodemus is very kind. He tries to enliven our father's mind. Thou knowest he is full of wise sayings taken from the Talmud. Only yesterday, in order to tease Mary and amuse our father, he quoted from the Targum of Jonathan:

" 'Jewish traditions say that Adam had a tail and from it Eve was made. Another tradition tells us that Eve was made from the thirteenth rib of the right side, and that she was not drawn out by the head, lest she should be vain;

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nor by the eyes, lest she should be wanton; nor by the mouth, lest she should be given to garrulity; nor by the hands, lest she should be a meddler; nor by the heart, for fear she should be jealous, but she was taken out from the side. Yet, in spite of all these precautions, she had all the faults so carefully provided against, and he laughed heartily.

"Mary laughed, but she did not seem very well pleased. My father was much amused when Nicodemus gave this sentence from the Mishnah:

" 'A ram has one voice while alive, but seven after he is dead. How so? His horns make two trumpets; his hip bones, two pipes; his skin can be stretched into a drum; his larger intestines can yield strings for the harp, and the smaller ones for the lyre.'

"One of the sayings of Nicodemus was the occasion of our father's praising thee, my brother. Quoting from the Gemara, he said:

" 'If a man does not work during six days of the week, he may be obliged to work all the seventh.'

" 'Ah! that does not apply to Lazarus. He is a good son, and attendeth to his duties diligently,' said our father.

"On the last Sabbath he was much amused when Nicodemus, quoting the Avoth of Rab Nathan, from the Gemara, said:

" 'Seven have no portion in the world to come: a notary, a schoolmaster, the best physician, the judge who dispenseth justice in his

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own town, a congregational reader, a law officer in the synagogue, and a butcher.'

"Nicodemus explained by saying the reason is that these seven are apt to be in some cases harsh, in others unjust, and in others unscrupulous.

"Our father's thoughts now dwell much on the future. One day, while talking to Nicodemus of the life beyond the grave, he was much interested when that old friend said:

" 'Seven things are hidden from the knowledge of man: the day of his death; the day of resurrection; the depth of judgment; the future reward or punishment; what is in the heart of his fellow man; what his reward will be when the kingdom of David is restored; and when the kingdom of Persia will fall.'

"Thus thou seest, my brother, that this kindly, though timid, member of the Sanhedrim seeks to enliven and cheer our father in his despondency. I do not wish to alarm thee, but anything may happen. I will keep thee informed of his condition, and will send a fleet messenger to thee should there arise any immediate danger.

"The conduct of our Sister Mary gives me much cause for uneasiness. Thou knowest that for years she has lacked a mother's restraining influence. Ever since our father told her that she would inherit the castle at Magdala at his death an unrest has seized upon her which is quite inexplicable. She appears dissatisfied with everything; is often petulant and un-

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reasonable, scolding and sometimes even beating her attendants. When the fit of anger is passed she is all repentance, and will give the servants, and even the slaves, extravagant presents, as if to make amends for her ebullitions of temper. Sometimes for days together she will remain in her cubiculum, moping and moody, saying nothing, or answering in monosyllables those who address her. At times the grief of our father, even, does not seem to affect her.

"Extremely beautiful, as thou knowest she is, endowed with a remarkable perfection of form, and not altogether an ill-stored mind, for days together she will neglect her personal appearance, clothe herself in unsightly and ill-fitting garments, and to all she seems as dull-witted as the most stupid of the slaves. At such times she will not take her usual pride in her luxuriant hair, which then falls loose and uncared for over her shoulders.

"Anon, she will devote much time to her vesture. She hath, as thou knowest, a large number of beautiful robes—our father never having denied her request, even for the most costly merchandise of the mart. At these times she will darken her eyebrows and eyelashes with plumbum and paint her cheeks—an operation which thou, who knowest her so well, canst readily understand adds nothing to her great beauty. Then she will be in a gay mood, and laugh and dance and sing. In ordinary times I like these moods in her, but considering the

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condition of our father's health at present, they show a want of consideration. No matter whether he be ill or well, she will play on the harp or zither, and even the noisy timbrel or scarcely less noisy tabret. Even as I write, her rich voice is ringing through all the rooms of the castle, notwithstanding that our dear, patient father is lying in a vain endeavor to catch some sleep.

"She professes a great desire to join thee in Magdala. She is restless and unsatisfied. Our father will not consent to her going. He tells her thou art busily engaged in looking after the estate, and that thou wouldst have no time to devote to her, and she would altogether lack the companionship of those of her own station. She is by no means satisfied with his decision. Her moods change from grave to gay as suddenly as the shadows fall on ripening grain when the clouds flit across the face of the sun. I do not know what will happen to her. I fear much for her. Do not believe, O Lazarus, my brother, but that there is much good in her. We all love her dearly, yet these changing impulses make me uneasy.

"Only yesterday her goodness of heart was apparent. A poor man met with a serious accident on the road in front of our castle. He was thrown from his horse and hurt by being kicked by the frightened animal. Mary and I saw the accident from the roof. Without veiling or covering her head she rushed down to the road as she was, lifted the wounded man,

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bathed the wounds in his head, and had him taken to the servants' rooms with as much care and kindness as if she had been ministering to thee instead of to a stranger.

"An hour later her mood had changed. She was again listless and without interest. The man had recovered consciousness and wished to thank her, yet she would not move from her room, seemingly now quite indifferent to the welfare of one in whom a little while before she had taken the keenest interest.

"One day she will be overflowing with kindness toward the poor of Bethany; another, she will refuse the beggar a piece of bread at the gate. Not a week ago she spent the whole day in the sun, going from one sick person to another in our town. The following morning she would not allow the vine-dresser to pluck a bunch of grapes for a patient whom she had previously visited.

"I fear that when our father dies—and in the course of nature he will not live many more years, and perhaps, owing to a mind ill at ease, not many months more—I fear she will then throw off all restraint imposed by thee, who wilt then be the head of the family, and perhaps cause us heartrending grief. Well, dear Lazarus, let us not go out to meet trouble. If it come, it will be heavy enough.

"There are strange reports in Jerusalem of Hezir Bar Abbas. Some say he is a disinterested patriot, ambitious to raise an army to free our country. Others, that he is living an

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idle life of luxury with means that come from no one knows where. His reputation is daily becoming more doubtful. The Egyptian, Pathira, is ever becoming more and more attached to our father. I sometimes notice a wistful, far-away look in his eyes for which I am unable to account. He is studying our sacred books. Doubtless ere long he will become a proselyte of the gate. He is very faithful in the discharge of his duties at the bazaar. Nicodemus—God reward him!—who, during thy absence spends much time at the mart, speaks very highly of this descendant of Cham to our father. Our loving father is very solicitous to get trace of the man Eliziel, from whom he purchased Omri's jewels. Nothing has been heard of him for many months. He it is who, if he but chose to speak, could exonerate our father from the suspicions under which he imagines his name is clouded.

"I am much interested in what thou tellest me regarding the wonderful youth of Nazareth. From thy description of him he must be a marvelous child. It appears that he is not quite unknown in Jerusalem. Nicodemus tells us that three years ago he appeared in the doctor's porch of the Temple during the Paschal solemnity and displayed wonderful knowledge. This Sanhedrist tells me that Zadiel Ben Israel, who is cousin to our lamented mother Eucharia, tendered him the hospitality of his house on that occasion. The impression he created among the members of Zadiel's family has

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never been forgotten. It is their frequent theme of conversation even up to this time.

"Who knows, Lazarus, whether the prophecies of our Scriptures may not find fulfillment in him! Thou describest well. It would rejoice my heart to see him, but at present I can not think of leaving our father. If this duty did not prevent me, I would bring Mary with me and make a short sojourn with thee at Magdala, and we would go to Nazareth together. This I hope to do some day, but it must wait as long as filial duty keeps me here.

"From what thou sayest of the mother of this son, I can imagine she must have affected thee deeply when I remember thy deep love for Eucharia, our mother. Dost thou remember the great number of days thou didst fast for her soul, and how thou didst exceed the number of days of mourning for her! Thy filial and affectionate nature could not stand to see another's grief. Well I know thy tender heart. Well I know thy love.

"The beautiful Nazarite woman may, as thou thinkest, have been offering a divine reparation—who can tell? We are surrounded by mysteries. God's chosen people have received many signs from heaven. For aught we know, O Lazarus, she may be another Deborah, or another Esther, or even greater. This youth who hath captivated thy soul may be our Messias, and the beautiful woman may——"

Here the letter broke off suddenly. Something alarming had taken place at Bethany.

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When it was resumed, it was finished with these hurriedly written words:

"Haste thee back, Lazarus! Haste thee! thy father is dying! He calleth for thee. He hath suddenly been stricken. Come with all speed if thou wouldst see him alive! Haste!

"From Martha."

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CHAPTER IX

THE PASSING OF SIRO

THE sun was within an hour of setting when Lazarus read the last portion of Martha's letter. He read the closing lines twice before he grasped their full import. At his heartrending cry Amarias rushed in. The castle was soon in commotion. The steward was told to have ready at once the fleetest horse that could be procured. Lazarus, who intended to travel all night, and to start at once, took a hasty meal. He hoped, by not wasting a moment, to be fortunate enough to see his father alive. He could change horses on the journey. Zamlech, the bearer of the letter, was ready to accompany him, but he would not hear of this. The Bedouin was already weary with his long journey. The young master insisted upon his sleeping at least one night at Magdala. He might, if he chose, start for Bethany in the morning, if sufficiently rested.

A few minutes later Lazarus was impatiently waiting in front of the castle for his horse. Amarias soon came with two, saddled and caparisoned for the journey.

"Why hast thou brought two horses, good Amarias?" asked Lazarus.

"Because, my master, thou must not make this journey alone."

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"Fear not for me, good friend," said Lazarus. "It is moonlight, and I will take the by-paths in those places known to be infested with robber bands. Thy years are many, and I will not put this burden on thee."

Amarias, however, insisted on accompanying his master's son.

"I should not be a faithful servant to my master, thy father, did I let his only son travel this long distance alone in the unsettled state of our land. Forbid me not, O sir! Time is precious. It would take several hours to collect and make ready the little band which came with thee. I go instead. If there be danger on the road, I share it with thee."

In the midst of his grief Lazarus was touched by this devotion. He made no further objection. The steward could obtain relays of horses with more ease and with greater expedition than he himself could. Amarias knew all the khans on the road between Magdala and Jerusalem, and he was well known to many people. This would be an advantage should any misfortune overtake them; he was, also, a much better horseman than his young master, whose habits of life had hitherto precluded much exercise of this nature.

The two rode along at a rapid pace, for the most part keeping silence—Lazarus, because he was filled with anxiety for his father, the other out of respect for his grief. The only sound for many miles was the rhythmical beat of the horse's hoofs on the stone road leading south

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which the Romans had constructed, the rattle of the chains of the animals' harness, the occasional cry of a flitting owl across their path, or the weird half-human laugh of the hyena skulking among the rocks by the wayside as the travelers hurried by.

The riders, fortunately, met with no delay during their long night journey, arriving at the village of Bethany just as the first crimson blush of dawn began to tinge the eastern sky. The travelers, whose approach the servants anxiously watched, were heard coming in the distance. Men were ready to take their horses the moment they arrived. Every room in the castle of Bethany was lighted.

"Is my father yet alive?" anxiously inquired Lazarus, as he dismounted. A servant answered:

"The master lives. He has made signs during the night that he wished for thy presence."

"May the God of Israel be praised," exclaimed the son of Siro, as he hastily entered the house. He did not wait for the usual ablutions, but ran at once to his father's room, where he expected to find him. He was not there. After his sudden attack he had been removed to the guest room on the roof, which was cooler and more pleasant. On his way thither he met his sister Martha. Her face was pale and pinched with grief; dark rings were around her eyes, tears on their lashes.

"I rejoice, my brother," she said, as she embraced him, "that thou hast come in time. He

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has asked for thee many times. I fear he has but a few hours to live. Come."

She led the way to the roof. The room was dimly lighted by a small silver hanging lamp, which threw but a feeble ray over the white hair and head of Siro. Mary stood at the side of the low settle, patiently fanning her father with a green palm leaf. When Lazarus entered the old merchant was sleeping lightly. The noise of footsteps aroused him. He opened his eyes, and recognized his son with a look of pleasure.

Feebly Siro moved his hand, which Lazarus took and covered with tears and kisses. The dying man then raised it, and after gently stroking the kneeling youth's hair for a moment, let it rest on his head in benediction. He spoke feebly and with great difficulty. Lazarus caught the words—"Keep the law of Israel—sisters—Eliziel—the Messias."

Then articulation ceased. The lips moved, but no sound came from them. A moment later, with a sigh and a fluttering of the chest, the end came.

Grateful that he had reached his journey's end in time, the grief of Lazarus was tempered by this, and by the knowledge that he had received his father's last blessing.

When he saw that his parent had passed away, he restrained his grief sufficiently to exercise the privilege of the nearest of kin. According to the custom of the Jews ever since the time that "Joseph fell upon his father's

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face, weeping and kissing him," he at once arose, kissed his father's forehead, and reverently closed his eyes and mouth.

Having performed this act of natural piety, Lazarus for a few moments gave way to the impulse of overwhelming grief, mingling his wailings with those of Martha and Mary. The impetuous younger sister, whose long hair now hung round her like a veil, struck her hands together above her head and gave vent to a series of shrieks. Martha's first burst of sorrow was not so demonstrative, but none the less intense. After a short time the rest of the household were admitted to the death chamber and added their wailings to those of the bereaved family.

The arrangements for sepulture devolved on Lazarus. Owing to the great heat of Judea, corpses were generally buried on the day of death. In the case of a parent, the funeral ceremonies were sometimes delayed for twenty-four hours. The Levites of the nearest synagogue undertook the task of consigning the body to the grave.

Siro was well known in Jerusalem. His death was reported there within a short time after it occurred. Early in the day the professional mourners arrived. They were mostly women, prototypes of those of our own time, and who

"Let out their persons by the hour
To mimic sorrow when the heart's not sad."

The lugubrious wailing of the hired mourn-

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ers was accompanied by long and mournful notes on flutes and slender pipes, supposed to express, vicariously, the sorrow of the bereaved ones. Loud lamentations were kept up all the time the body remained unburied. The shrill notes of the wailing women penetrated to every part of the castle.

There were many real mourners among the friends of Lazarus and his sisters. Notwithstanding the instructions of the great Jewish Lawgiver: "You shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness for the head," many of the poor whom Siro had befriended pulled out tufts of hair from their heads. Others scratched their faces until they bled. To accomplish this they used the nail of the left thumb, which, by many, was left long and untrimmed for occasions of this description.[1]

When the sickness was protracted and death expected for some time, the custom was observed of bringing ten witnesses into the room to be present at the last moment. This was not observed in the case of Siro, as his death had been so sudden that Lazarus had no time to collect his friends, even had he wished to do so.

When the male friends arrived at the castle they sat apart and mourned in silence. During the whole of the day and the following night

[1]This singular custom of cutting and disfiguring the face at the death of a relative or dear friend survives among the Montenigrin schismatic Greeks. The custom is also found to exist among the aboriginal Australians, and in Ethiopia and Abyssinia.

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the women kept up their mournful plaint. The body, from the moment of death until interment, was not left alone, although the majority of the mourners did not congregate in the same room.

It was the duty of Lazarus to wash the body of his father. He then anointed it with sweet-smelling ointment. The Levites from the synagogue of Bethany assisted him in swathing it in linen cere-cloths. Each limb was wound around with linen separately. The hands and feet were bound. The head was wrapped around with a white linen cloth.

When the preparations for burial were completed thus far, the body was clothed in the costliest robe the dead man's wardrobe afforded. Some followed the custom of enrobing the body in white. Others used for their relatives the most costly materials that could be purchased. Not unfrequently a crimson vesture and turban were used. In the course of time the providing of rich burial robes grew to be a great extravagance. The Rabbi Gamaliel, at a little later date than our story, brought about a reform with regard to expensive burial robes. He left an order, for example to others, to be buried in a plain linen tachrichin, or traveling costume. A cup of wine was emptied at burial feasts after that time in his honor, for his sensible example.

Lazarus, being abundantly able to afford the luxury, and desirous of giving his father all the honor possible, clothed the body in a rich silken

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grey garment, with turban of the same color and material.

At about the hour of noon of the next day the body was placed on an open bier, and was ready to be conveyed to its last resting place. The moment the funeral procession started sounds of intense mourning and lamentation arose. The women increased their cries, and wrung their hands or struck them together above their heads—a gesture of extreme sorrow. The male mourners gave external manifestation of grief by striking the thigh and throwing dust upon the head.

The cave-sepulcher, where Eucharia, the wife of Siro, lay buried, was in a remote part of the garden at Bethany. When the distance between the house and the burial place was considerable, frequent stops were made to give the bearers relief. On these occasions short orations were delivered by special friends of the deceased, who eulogized his virtues and told of the troubles and the difficulties he had conquered during life.

As Siro was buried on his own property, the time taken by the procession was brief. Only one stop was made. When the bier had been let down from the shoulders of the bearers, the Sanhedrist Nicodemus, as the nearest friend of the dead merchant, spoke to the mourning people of his many good qualities. The speech was brief, for the mourners soon began to move and sound their flutes and pipes. Mourners preceded the corpse in Judean funeral proces-

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sions, and thus in some measure controlled the length of the funeral orations. In Galilee the corpse went first.

Siro's burial place was a rock-hewn chamber about eight feet deep, eighteen or twenty feet long and ten feet high. The lower part of the far wall formed a shelf, or bench, on which the body was placed in a recumbent position. These resting-places for the dead were called *kokim*, or *loculi*. As the corpse was borne to the door of the cave, many friends scattered sweet spices or pulverized aromatic gums over it. Others scattered flowers. When the body was finally laid in position in the tomb it was literally in a bed of spices and sweet-smelling blossoms.

Lazarus was desirous that all the traditions with regard to burial should be exactly observed. In compliance, therefore, with custom, the procession moved from the house to the sepulcher with great rapidity. It was the common Jewish belief of that period that innumerable *shedim*, or evil spirits, hovered about the corpse, desirous of attacking the soul, having the power to do so while the body remained uninterred. The place of burial was also determined by the belief that the unity of the family tribe continued after death. The bodies of those who desired to be united with their parents and family in Sheol must be buried in the family sepulcher.

As chief mourners, Lazarus, Martha, and Mary stood nearest to the entrance of the cave, clad in sackcloth, of which custom prescribed

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the wearing for thirty days. Relatives and close friends wore this sign of mourning for seven days. This sackcloth was a coarse linen robe, worn quite straight, without folds or sleeves, and bound around the waist with a cord. The remainder of the mourners covered the lower part of the face with a cloth, which helped to muffle the voice and render their wailings more lugubrious.

At the actual moment of interment, many threw themselves on the ground in an apparent abandonment of grief, while their wailings and lamentations rose to the highest point. The professional mourners' "ulaleu! ulaleu!" similar to the "loo! loo! loo!" of the wail of the Turks in Palestine at the present day, arose at the burial of Siro in dirge-like monotony, forming a somewhat fantastic funeral accompaniment to the real grief of the bereaved family and their friends.

When the body had been placed in position in the cave, Lazarus and his sisters and their immediate friends bowed themselves down to the earth and prayed. This prayer and the recitation of the 103d Psalm, as the procession wended its way back to the house, were the only semblances of a religious ceremony in the burial. The prayer was taken from the book of the Eighteen Benedictions. It showed the strong Jewish belief in the general resurrection. For the benefit of the student of Jewish customs it is here transcribed:

"Thou, O Lord, art mighty forever; Thou

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quickenest the dead. Thou art strong to save; Thou sustaineth the living by Thy mercy; Thou quickenest the dead by Thy great compassion; Thou makest good Thy faithfulness to them that sleep in the dust; Thou art faithful to quicken the dead; blessed art Thou, O Lord, Who quickenest the dead."

When the men had prayed, several of them took up a sod and threw it behind them, saying: "Remember, O man, that dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return."

Others used a different formula: "They shall flourish out of the city like grass upon the earth," to indicate their belief that the body, though dead, should spring up again like grass.

As the stone door of the cave-tomb was about to be replaced, several of the near friends of the deceased approached the Levites who were conducting the ceremonies, and offered tear vases, to be placed by the side of the body of Siro. These lachrymatories were small phials of fine red earthenware, having long slim necks and holding less than half a pint of liquid. They were filled with the tears of the sorrowers, and were prized as memorials of grief for the departed.

A repetition of the wailing accompanied the return of the procession. Upon entering the house, the family and relatives of the dead man washed their hands and sat down to "the bread of the mourners," a meal consisting of bread, boiled eggs and lentils, served in earthenware dishes. According to custom, no fire was

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lighted, no cooking done for thirty days. It was a kindly and charitable custom for neighbors to bring in baked meats. After the meal the mourning continued until sundown, the men and women going to different parts of the house.

Mary and Martha sat on a carpet on the floor in the midst of the women, who, at first, formed a large circle around the room near the walls. At stated periods all would rise and approach a step or two toward the sorrowing sisters, and sit down again, all the while observing silence. This action was repeated several times until all were close to the chief mourners, when, at a given signal, their grief would break forth into loud lamentations once more.

In another part of the house the men sat down, some to console Lazarus, some to weep, and others to meditate on death. The ceremony of rising and approaching, similar to that observed by the women, was observed, but no one opened his mouth to speak until Lazarus had first spoken. Less demonstrative, and altogether less formal than the women, the men evinced a more sincere and delicate appreciation of the grief of Lazarus. For several days after the burial some of the friends returned to mourn with the family.

According to unbroken custom, the son of Siro, among other things was forbidden to shave his beard or cut his hair. Bathing or anointing the body was prohibited, at least for

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seven days, although the bereaved one was permitted to take what would now be termed a shampoo of a mixture made of egg and wine. The washing of clothes, wearing of shoes, attending to any kind of business, or the study of the books of the law, were discontinued for the same period, during which time no one was supposed to uncover his head or give a salutation to another. For the seven days the phylacteries were not worn at the time of prayer. For a month, Lazarus and his sisters were not supposed to pay any attention to their hair, nor were they allowed to attend weddings, or go from one place to another.

According to the universal custom of their race, these three were to mourn for their parent for twelve months, a period during which they were to refrain from feasts, salutations, and all manifestations of joy. They were expected to keep a light burning in the synagogue for that length of time. Children were expected to pray for their parents for eleven months after death. This period was set apart for this pious practice, so as not to necessitate the admission that one's parents had been detained in Sheol, or purgatory, for longer than a year, and rather to believe that at the expiration of that time they had gone to the joys of Abraham's bosom.

While the avel, or period of mourning for thirty days, lasted, Lazarus was the Onen, the bowed-down one, and had the privilege of entering the special mourning gate of the Temple.

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At a death, it was customary among the relatives for each one to tear the inner garment about a hand-breadth in length. This rending of garments by children for their parents was never repaired. Friends who rent their garments in sympathy sewed them again after thirty days.

The will of Siro was opened when the first month of mourning had been completed. The disposal of his property was such as he had intimated to his family some years before, when he told Mary that she was to be the future mistress of the castle of Magdala with its rose-fields and vine-clad hills. Martha inherited the large house, or castle, at Bethany, with all its fields. The share which fell to Lazarus was the bazaar and all its treasures, together with many houses in Jerusalem.

The first care of Lazarus, as soon as custom had freed him and he was at liberty to attend to business again, was to erect a memorial column close to the sepulcher of his father. He also whitened the exterior walls of the abode of the dead, although it was only the month of Ab, or August. This whitening of sepulchers was done every year, according to a saying in the Talmud, which had the force of a law:

"Why do they whiten the sepulchers in the month of Adar (March)? Because, just as the leper cries 'Unclean! Unclean!' so by this white color the tombs say, 'Come not near us'—for fear of legal defilement."

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CHAPTER X

PATHIRA

AFTER the month of mourning had passed and Lazarus could leave his house without shocking the sensibilities of his friends and neighbors, he was one evening walking in the garden which contained the sepulcher of his father. It was the month of Ellul, or September. The weather was still warm. The breeze that came at evening from the western sea was refreshing. Taking a seat beneath a terebinth tree, Lazarus listened with rapture to the liquid notes of the bul-bul as they came in the gloaming from some low plum bushes a short distance away. His spirit was soothed by the flood of melody.

For the first time in many days he was enabled to throw off the sadness which had enveloped him as with a garment. Sensitive and of refined nature, as he was, the full, soft, delicious notes of the night singer gave him most exquisite pleasure.

The sudden termination of his father's successful career, the grief for his death, the sense of responsibility so unexpectedly and prematurely thrust upon him, especially in guiding and caring for his younger, and somewhat headstrong sister, made him anxious about the future. There arose in his heart, for the first

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time, a strong desire for a friend of near his own age to whom he could confide his doubts and anxieties, and thereby secure confidence in himself by an interchange of thought with one who understood him.

Lazarus was without any real friend at this period of his life. That boon was to come to him later, and it was to be of so marvelous a nature as to make him a unique character in the annals of the world.

At present he was without such a blessing. When he had grown up to young manhood his father had become more and more of a companion to him. Their frequent journeys from Jerusalem had brought this about. Now that his father had passed away, Lazarus realized his loneliness with something of dismay. He knew several young men, but such was his sterling character that mere acquaintance did not constitute friendship.

Nicodemus, who was much nearer his dead father's age than his own, was too advanced in years to fill this office for Lazarus. The influential senator was, rather, the wise counselor of the family. He had, during the period of the enforced seclusion, been of invaluable assistance in looking after the affairs of the bazaar, and seeing that Zamlech and Pathira and the other young men faithfully performed their duty. For all this, and for many other acts of kindness, Lazarus was deeply grateful, yet he felt that he could not make a real friend of him, much less a confidant such as he longed

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for at the present. He passed in mental review the number of his acquaintances, and found there was no one among them all to whom he could freely open his heart.

Sad as he was, nevertheless in the song of the bul-bul he found a kind of consolation. Melting and mournful were the cadences which came from the bird's honeyed throat, yet to Lazarus there appeared to be an under-note of rapturous joy running through it all. The son of Siro was neither sentimental nor effeminate, yet the beauty of the melody in the gathering darkness of the soft summer evening soothed and cheered him. It was as if the song of the bird were a message to him, telling him that a coming boon—whatever it was to be—would take the place of friend and lover, of father and mother, and of all else beside. The spirits of the young man began to rise. He did not stop to think that his reasoning was fantastic, but gave full rein to the impressions of the hour. He regarded the singing of the bird as an omen of good.

Long he sat and enjoyed the music in the darkness. The Judean galaxy shone brightly overhead—great pendants of flame. Stirred by the gentle night breeze, the palms gave forth a companionable, rustling sound. As he thought over his position, he gained confidence in himself and in the providence of God. He who had helped and blessed his parents would also guide him through life's way. He would seek no companionship other than Martha and

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Mary. He and his sisters should be all in all to each other.

In a revery, Lazarus lived over again the scene of the last moments of his father. Ah! what was that dying admonition! The law of Israel! Yes, he would be a faithful Jew. He would, with his increased responsibilities, set the example to his household. He would religiously keep all the ceremonial observances, and watch that those under him were likewise faithful.

His father had thought of Mary and Martha when dying. It should be his life's work to care for them. He would try to fill the place of father and mother; endeavor to smooth those anxious days of Martha, who, in the kindness of her heart, worried so much about the domestic arrangements.

And Mary! headstrong, wayward, impetuous Mary! Ah! a skilful hand would be required to manage this beautiful girl. He would be firm, yet gentle, with her. Her loving spirit should not be broken, nor goaded into rebellion. Putting on his head-covering, which he had laid aside for coolness, he prayed the God of Israel that he might remain faithful to the dying wish of his father.

What did his parent mean when he mentioned the name of Eliziel. Was it that the son should forgive the injury done the father? Lazarus did not think that this was the intention of his father. His Jewish thought and training was rather of the *lex talionis*. He

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could not think that Siro intended or desired him to forgive the deeds of Eliziel or those connected with him. He knew his father had not grieved over the money loss; for several years something deeper and more vexing than that had rankled in his breast; it was the imputation of dishonesty, the beclouding of a fair name, that the upright merchant resented. It was this that had embittered his last days, and undoubtedly shortened them.

As Lazarus pondered all the circumstances, he clearly saw how it must have been Siro's wish that he, his son, should use every means to vindicate his father's memory. Under the inspiration of this thought, Lazarus raised his hands to heaven and prayed:

"May the Lord—the Holy One, blessed be His name—forget me and mine if I use not every endeavor to clear my father's name. May the Lord send the guilty one compunction, for one pang at a man's heart is of more avail than many stripes applied to him."

While he was occupied in these thoughts, his attention was attracted by the rustling of leaves and a slight disturbance in a cluster of tall shrubs a few feet away. He listened attentively and heard the cracking of dry twigs under some one's feet.

The moon had risen, shedding her mild light over the garden. By its beams Lazarus was able to see objects distinctly out in the open, but there was not sufficient light to enable him to distinguish any one moving in the shade of

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the trees. Being aware of the restless, and to some extent the lawless, state of the times, the thought immediately flashed across his mind that there might be men in the garden intending to rob his father's tomb. It was the custom of rich Jews to place considerable wealth in the tomb of their relatives. Hyrcanus, seeing himself besieged within the city of Jerusalem by Antiochus, surnamed the Pious, took out of King David's sepulcher, nine hundred years after his death, three thousand talents, whereof he gave part to the prince to make him retire with his army, and with the other he raised soldiers to put himself in a condition of preventing a like disaster in the time to come. Out of the same sepulcher, Herod, a long time after, took a great number of vessels of gold, jewels and precious ornaments.

The son of Siro had placed nothing of value within the tomb of his father; still he was aware that, as the family was reputed among the wealthiest in Jerusalem, many of the common people were probably under the impression that great riches had been enclosed within the place of burial.

With these thoughts in his mind he stepped out from the shade of the terebinth tree into the open space. He was unarmed, yet he put his hand to his cincture, as if ready to draw a sword.

"Master!"

"Who speaks? Come out into the moonlight."

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"I dare not, good master. I dare not be seen."

"Who art thou? What dost thou want? Honest men do not hide themselves in the dark."

"Have patience with me, good sir. Go into the shade of the turpentine tree again, and I will come around to you and tell you my message."

"How do I know that thou hast not some evil intent?" asked Lazarus.

"I would not take this risk of coming here did I not wish you well, and desire to serve you. You are within the call of your servants."

"Who art thou, that I may know whether or not to trust thee?"

"I am Pathira. Good master, betray me not. Let me be seen by no one."

Lazarus went to the seat he had previously occupied, and waited. Pathira, creeping from bush to bush, and running from shade to shade in a wide detour, at length reached the spot where Lazarus was awaiting him.

"What bringeth thee here, and in this mysterious manner?"

Mild as was Lazarus in speech in general, his tone was anything but gentle now.

"O master, be not angry. I come for two reasons. One that I may serve you in memory of your father, Siro, who was ever kind to me. The other to beg you, who are like unto your father, to assist me and my Nigrita."

"How wouldst thou serve me, Pathira?"

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"In this way, my master. You remember some years ago one Hezir Bar Abbas—a great lord among your people, I was told—came to the bazaar with your father's friend, Israel Ben Addai, of the valley of the cheesemongers. Have you forgotten how excited your father became when they spoke of the killing of the young children in one of the towns in the south of your country?"

"I remember. Yes, yes, go on!"

"This Hezir Bar Abbas, whom I greatly fear, has since taken a number of his followers into Idumea, where they now live by attacking the caravans that come up from Alexandria. He is chief of a robber band."

"Well?"

"He it was who stole the precious stones which your father purchased of Eliziel."

"What! Tell me more, I pray," said Lazarus eagerly, and very much excited.

"It is true, my master, that Eliziel refused to join the robber's band. He claims to have a higher motive than robbery in his desire to gather wealth. He hopes to raise an army to resist the Romans. Bar Abbas at one time had the same idea, but now he is a common robber. Eliziel was his agent in the selling of the diamonds at the bazaar, and I believe he thought he was acting rightly. Be that as it may, he was merely the tool of Bar Abbas, who received all the money your father paid for them."

"But how knowest thou all this, unless——"

"The answer to that question, my lord,

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brings me to the second reason why I have come to-night. Will you, O master, hear my story?"

Lazarus signified his assent.

"Hezir Bar Abbas, when I fell under his evil influence," continued Pathira, "had many agents to do his bidding. Some of these came to the Nile and spirited away my wife, and keep her in hiding. I was told that, if I came quietly to Jerusalem and did the bidding of Bar Abbas in certain things, she would be restored to me, and I should be permitted to return to my little house and garden of leeks on the banks of our great river."

"What was the nature of the service required?" asked the son of Siro, convinced by the earnestness of the man before him of the story's truth.

Pathira remained silent, laboring under great excitement. Dark as it was in the shadow of the tree beneath which they were standing, Lazarus saw him tremble. Pathira suddenly fell upon his knees. Stretching forth his hands supplicatingly, he said:

"O master, how can I tell! You and your father have been so kind and good to me! How shall I tell you! Remember, I pray, my wife, torn from my arms, and taken I know not where! Forgive! forgive me, master!"

"What wrong or evil hast thou done me, Pathira?" asked Lazarus, gently. His kind tone seemed to encourage the trembling Egyptian.

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"I will tell you all, then do with me what you will. Hezir Bar Abbas wounded me deeply in taking away my Nigrita. My heart bleeds! Oh, I would do anything to regain her! This man knew that. He possessed wonderful magic powers—so all his followers told me—against which it was useless for me to strive. I was doomed to fulfill his commands, or never see my wife again. Remember, master, and be not angry, the recovery of my wife was in one balance of the scale, unfaithfulness to you and Siro in the other! 'Tis true that I did once, on that first visit of his, point out the position of the coffer, but nothing came of that. The condition of her discovery and rescue was that I should assist Bar Abbas in making a raid on Siro's bazaar, and in securing the keys of the chest wherein your wealth is stored."

"And thou comest to tell me that thou hast done all this—that thou hast betrayed me!"

"Nay, nay, my lord, not so! Hezir Bar Abbas held over me a spell which I could not throw off—hear me, master—yet I delayed from time to time, although he frequently threatened my life. I thank Apis and Path I have not yielded. Until now I have been afraid to speak to you in the mart for fear of watching eyes. Since he has left Jerusalem altogether, and now abides in the mountain country to the south, his power over me is lessened. I know my life is in danger from his spies. I believe that should they see me here now talking to you, my body would be carrion ere

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to-morrow's sun should rise. I have not betrayed you."

The man's abject fear begot pity in the breast of Lazarus, who, seeing that in the main he had acted rightly, said to him:

"Thou art a good and faithful servant. I thank thee for thy fidelity."

"You are not displeased! O master! I live!"

"Why didst thou not tell me all this before?"

"Because I lived in dread. I feared so much for my poor ill-used Nigrita. In the beginning I was a coward to you, but it was for her sake, yet I have never done what Abbas demanded. I have never aided him, although I fear that at some time an attempt will be made to rob you of your gold."

"Be not uneasy. My young men are faithful. Didst thou have any children when thy wife was stolen by the agents of Bar Abbas?"

"Yes, yes, good master; two young boys—two dear children, who pine daily for their mother and me."

"Where are they, Pathira?"

"Good friends in Cairo cared for them for a long time. When I had enough money these good people sent the boys to me here, where I take care of them when I am not in the bazaar."

"Bring them to Bethany to-morrow. They shall have a home in my household with my servants. Thou shalt be one of my household henceforth. Thou shalt be company for me daily on the lonely road to Jerusalem. I

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will assign thee a place among my people to-morrow."

Pathira, in his gratitude, appeared incapable of words. He raised the hem of the robe of his master to his lips.

"Hast thou no idea where thy——"

"Nigrita is?" interrupted Pathira, eagerly. "No, master, no; none, alas! My heart withers for her. I would give my life to fold her once more in my arms."

"Be of good cheer, Pathira; we will search for her."

The Egyptian shook his head despondently.

"I fear the search will be useless. For many moons have I inquired, spending all the money I could spare from my children in paying men to look for her. I fear I shall never, never see her again. Truly, my heart is withered!"

"Take courage," said the sympathetic Lazarus. "To-morrow I will go to the procurator. He is just. As my servant, thou canst claim the protection of the law. Let us hope for the best."

The native of the land of the Pharaohs arose from his kneeling posture. He was a fine specimen of physical manhood, and now he appeared taller than usual. Hope and joy shone in his eye. He took his master's hand and covered it with kisses, and dampened it with his tears of gratitude.

"Thou hast done well in coming to me, although thou shouldst have come long ago. I forgive thee the delay because of what thou

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hast told me to-night, and on account of thy sorrow."

Pathira, with a lighter and more hopeful heart than he had felt for many a day, threw a square, dark-grey traveling cloth over his head and wrapped it around his body. Thus fairly disguised, he glided out of the garden and was lost to sight in the darkness.

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CHAPTER XI

AN INVITATION

LAZARUS found it no easy matter to obtain an audience with the procurator. Immediately before the time of Pathira's troubles there had been many changes in Judea. Gessius Florus, Caponius, Marcus Ambivius, and Annus Rufus had each occupied the Judean procuratorship for a short period. Owing to the incapacity of some, and the unscrupulous conduct of others, none of them remained long in office. At length Valerius Gratus took possession of the province in the name of the Caesar. He was the immediate predecessor of Pontius Pilate, and governed about ten years. He appears in some measure to have been successful in the strenuous efforts he made to put down lawlessness in the territory over which he ruled, for the people were more tranquil and content under his sway than ever before.

Lazarus, at this time, was about twenty years of age. He did not doubt that Valerius Gratus would endeavor to have justice done to every one living under the protection of the laws he administered. Gratus had not yet returned from Caesaria Palestina, where he was accustomed to spend the hotter months of the summer, when Lazarus learned of the injustice done to Pathira.

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Lazarus was therefore compelled to wait some weeks before he could move in the matter. In the meantime, he kept a sharp lookout, trying in many ways to discover something of Nigrita. The difficulties of the search were not lessened by the fact that dark-skinned women of Egypt were no uncommon sight in the towns and cities of Judea and Samaria. They held menial positions, or were slaves, in many households. Probably this woman had been sold as a slave in some unimportant place, or, perhaps, kept in close confinement by order of Bar Abbas, who, now that his plans of robbing the oaken chest had come to naught—at least for the present—would not be likely to divulge his secret or allow any clue to escape through his agents whereby the patient and long-suffering Pathira might discover the place where his wife was detained.

Nicodemus frequently visited the bazaar after Lazarus had resumed his ordinary occupations. His advice and counsel were valuable to the younger man, who, although he had learned from his father how to conduct the business in a general way, often stood in need of some more experienced judgment than his own in particular circumstances. Of the affair of Pathira and his wife Lazarus made Nicodemus a confidant. The old Sanhedrist was very angry when he learned the story. Somewhat blinded by his anger at the injustice, he was eager for immediate action, and would have gone at once to the Sanhedrim and laid

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the case before that body, had not Lazarus, not without some difficulty, convinced him that such a course would not only be futile, but even detrimental on account of the publicity, which would enable the abductors to be on their guard.

The outrage was a question for the Roman authorities, rather than the Sanhedrim, to deal with, for it pertained neither to the religious observances of the Jews nor did it come under the ordinary civil laws of which that august body had the administration.

Angry as Nicodemus was in the beginning with Hezir Bar Abbas, he became more concerned about the possibility of an attack upon his young friend's money chest than for the welfare of the Egyptian's wife.

"I would recommend thee to defend thy place of business," he said one day, in the divan, "to defend it night and day. I would advise thee to sleep here, were it not that the Talmud says: 'It is indiscreet for one to sleep in a house as the sole occupant, for Lilith will seize hold of him.' "

The young man having studied the Gemara of the Mishna understood the allusion. Lilith, the night spirit—the night visiting one—was said by the teachers of the Talmud to have been Adam's first wife, who, for her refractory conduct, was transformed into a demon endowed with power to injure or even destroy infants and others unprotected by the necessary amulet or charm. Siro's son smiled, as he often had occasion, at the many traditions which the Talmudists had gathered around the Talmud itself.

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"I am no longer an infant," he answered lightly, "and I believe not in many of these traditions. Neither would I incur danger from Lilith, because the bazaar is not unoccupied at night. Nearly a dozen young men who serve in the mart sleep in the upper rooms."

"Hath Pathira kept silence to them concerning his affairs, thinkest thou?" asked Israel Ben Addai, who was one of the three in the divan. "If silence be good for wise men, how much better must it be for fools."

" 'Yea, for every evil silence is the best remedy,' " quoted Nicodemus, from the Gemara.

"That is true, good Nicodemus," said Ben Addai; "if speech is worth one sela, silence is worth two."

"My friends," said Lazarus, amused at the air of wisdom with which the two elderly men discussed a very ordinary topic, "since you seem so inclined to speak wise words from the Mishna, I will follow your example: 'He who learns from another one chapter, one halachah (Talmudic law), one verse, or even one letter, is bound to respect him.' I value silence as much as Simeon, the son of Gamaliel, who says: 'I have been brought up all my life among wise men and I have never found anything of more material benefit than silence.' Therefore thou givest me not enough credit, friend Nicodemus, when thou thinkest I have not enjoined the strictest silence on my servant Pathira. He also values it highly, for in its observance lies his only hope of regaining his lost wife."

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"Silence in a Babylonian," said Ben Addai, "was a mark of being of good family. Self-interest is likely to be a greater incentive with your Egyptian."

"Yes," observed Nicodemus, as he rubbed some of the perfumed ointment on the palm of his hands, "what saith the Rabbi Akiva: 'Laughter and levity lead a man to lewdness, but tradition is a safe defence to the law; tithes are a fence to riches; vows are a fence to abstinence, while the fence of wisdom is silence.'"

Notwithstanding their display of Talmudic lore, which, to those who did not understand the Jewish character, might appear pedantic, these men were keenly interested in the troubles of the dark-skinned worker in the bazaar. Their patience was severely tried by the continued delay of Valerius' return, during which time Pathira's case had to stand in abeyance. To the credit of the procurator, it must be said that, when Lazarus and his friends laid the case before him, he became much interested in it. He detailed two soldiers to search through every town and village. Their efforts were finally rewarded by finding Nigrita. She was discovered at Ascalon, on the coast. The two guards brought her to Jerusalem, wondering why the procurator should take so much interest in so insignificant a person.

It was a happy meeting between Nigrita and Pathira, well rewarding Lazarus and Nicodemus for the trouble they had undergone. The two, happy in their reunion, entered the

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service of Martha and Mary at Bethany, where they could at the same time attend to their two young children. Nigrita cherished the deepest gratitude toward her benefactors.

As if in recompense for his kindly deeds, Lazarus' business increased extraordinarily. He engaged more men to assist him. Nicodemus remained his constant friend and adviser. Martha's sage counsels added no little to his success. Ever careful and prudent at Bethany, her occasional visits to the bazaar were invaluable to her brother. Mary was sometimes a help in the mart, sometimes a hindrance. Once in a while she would come into Jerusalem with her brother and superintend the arranging and cleaning as only a woman can. Lazarus would, at these times, laughingly remark to Martha that her sister's visits were expensive, for often after a day's supervision she would demand a quantity of rich fabric for a robe, some precious unguent, or a golden ornament that would strike her fancy, the value of any one of which could procure assistance of the nature which she rendered for as many months as she had spent hours working in the bazaar.

Brotherly affection induced the master of the bazaar to humor her in her every desire. It never entered the mind of Lazarus to imagine that he was remunerating her for any service rendered. The beautiful fabrics which she took a fancy to were there; she desired some of them and Lazarus gratified her wish.

A decade of peaceful years passed away.

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Many times during this period of prosperity Lazarus recalled, with a species of fervent joy, the remembrance of his brief stay at the khan at Nazareth, and the wonderful youth he had seen there. It is true that the increased responsibilities which came to him at his father's death and his subsequent preoccupation of mind in conducting an ever-increasing business left him but little time to recall that vision. Yet often his thoughts would revert to that event in his life which had made so deep an impression on him, and he would dwell upon it in the quiet Sabbath rest of his home in Bethany after his attendance at the Temple sacrifice, or the local synagogue service where he listened on Sabbath afternoons to the Pirke Avoth, or chapter, or tract of the Gemara containing the moral apothegms of the Jewish sages.

During the ten years which had glided by so peacefully, he had many times asked himself whether this young Nazarene could be the coming Messias of the Jews. Oh, if he could but once more see him! once more gaze into the depths of those wondrous eyes!

He had never seen Nazareth again in all these years. The projected visit with his sisters had never taken place. Mary, after her father's death, lost much of her old restlessness and desire for change. Once, three years ago, she insisted on seeing her property at Magdala. She and Lazarus made the journey, but they did not pass through Nazareth, having taken a shorter route to the eastward.

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When Mary had been a day or two in her castle of Magdala, the novelty of the sense of ownership wore off. The size of the place and its general dinginess oppressed her. It was luxuriously furnished, but the halls and rooms had the musty smell of unfrequented houses. She expressed her desire to return, and on the third day after her arrival in the north she was again on her way to Bethany. After this visit Lazarus noticed with uneasiness a growing restlessness in his sister Mary.

As Zamlech and Pathira grew yearly more accustomed to the business of the mart, and consequently more helpful to their master, Lazarus was able to allow himself more leisure. He occupied himself much at home in transcribing copies of the Mishna, or in making extracts from the Gemara, or rabbinical expositions of the Talmud. He took great pleasure in this work, but perhaps greater in presenting his beautiful and accurate copies to the poorer synagogues.

Being of the tribe of Levi, Lazarus had the right to offer himself at the Temple as a candidate for the priesthood. No one who knew him doubted that, had he done so, he would have fulfilled all the exacting requirements of the examination regarding his physical perfection. Those who had known him as a student would have vouched for his mental capacity to master the intricate and involved study of the law.

Having been in his younger days a careful

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student of the Mishna, he knew well what the Rabbi Jehudah ben Yema had prescribed, and which was ordinarily accepted, as a Jew's career:

"At five years of age, reading the Bible; at ten, learning the Mishna; at thirteen, bound to the commandments; at fifteen, the study of the Talmud; at eighteen years, marriage; at twenty years, pursuit of trade (active life); at thirty, full vigor; at forty, maturity of reason; fifty years, for counsel; at sixty years, commencement of agedness; at seventy, grey age; at eighty, advanced old age; at ninety, bowed-down age; at one hundred, as if he were dead and gone and taken from the world."

Lazarus, likewise, knew that it was the commonly received opinion among his countrymen that if a man remain unmarried after the age of twenty his life is a constant transgression. "The Holy One—blessed be He—waits until that period to see if he enter the matrimonial state, and curses his bones if he remains single."

Devout Jew as was the brother of Mary and Martha, yet there were many things in the teachings of the Rabbins which he did not accept as divine commands. He realized, as did many intelligent men of his time, that the rabbinical teachings had overlaid the law and the Scriptures with much that was absurd and nonsensical, and with not a little that was mere superstition. He sometimes longed for a great reformer to come and burst the bonds of the

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rigid ceremonialism which made life for the strict followers of the Mosaic law an almost intolerable burden.

He had never had the inclination to take to himself a wife, nor had he seen any one whom he would be willing to take to his home at Bethany, and make the companion of his two sisters. Pharisees, among his acquaintance, shook their heads in disapproval. Some thought, as he had not observed the usual custom of his race with regard to marriage, he contemplated joining that strange and mysterious white-robed sect of Essenes. All conjectures, however, were wrong, and as unavailing as the disapproval of the Pharisees. Lazarus lived his own life, happy in the success of his bazaar and in the love of his sisters.

When Lazarus had reached the age of thirty-three, it became necessary to look after his agents in Damascus, one of whom had proved to be far from honest. Knowing that "the master's eye doeth much," he determined to go to that city and make personal investigation, leaving Zamlech in charge of the bazaar and the devoted Pathira at Bethany to protect his sisters and the household during his absence.

Within a day or so of the time he had decided to commence his journey, a messenger arrived in Jerusalem bearing a missive from a distant relative of Lazarus. Hesron and Ruth, of the town of Cana, in Galilee, wrote to the silk-merchant, inviting him and Mary and Martha to be present at the marriage feast of

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their daughter, Leah and Mechiel, the son of Heber, in the same place.

The sisters both declined the invitation, not caring to undertake so long a journey in the heat. They urged their brother to accept, however, and so to arrange his journey to Damascus as to stay a few days at Cana. They also desired him to visit Magdala on his return.

Ashbael, a native of Damascus, the bearer of the letter, was invited to rest at Bethany for a day or two while Lazarus made the final preparation for travel. It was from this guest that the two sisters first heard of the wonderful influence a roughly-clad teacher of the people was exerting on all who heard him. The story of his great powers affected Martha and Mary but little. They were inclined to think that Ashbael, in return for the hospitality he was receiving, was trying to make himself agreeable by talking about some person of merely northern local celebrity.

There were many preachers of strange doctrines in these days. More than one had been forbidden by the High Priest to speak or to teach to the people. More than one had ignored the command and had fallen into the hands of the Sanhedrim. The two sisters, therefore, attached but little importance to the relation of Ashbael.

It was different with Lazarus. He eagerly drank in every word. He asked for a description of the great preacher. When Ashbael, in glowing terms, described him whom he had

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seen in the desert, Lazarus asked himself whether this one could be the same lowly Nazarene youth he had seen years before, now grown to man's estate. Might it not be that he had already begun his mission? Might he not be that Messias whom all Israel was now expecting?

"Nay, nay, my kind host, that can not be," answered Ashbael, "for this wonderful speaker declares of himself that he is not the Expected One, but only the forerunner of One who is yet to come."

"Claimeth he not to be the Promised One?" again asked Lazarus.

"He most positively disclaimeth all such title," said Ashbael. "I, with many others who have heard him, was inclined, at first, to believe, notwithstanding his protestations to the contrary, he was the one sent by God. His burning words carry conviction. Men strike their breasts and weep aloud. He reads all hearts. He moves men at will. He preaches a repentance of sin. So striking, so awful, are his denunciations of vice that I have seen strong men tremble, and rush panting into the water, calling on him to baptize them as a public acknowledgment of their sinfulness and desire of a better life."

"On our journey," cried Lazarus, "we will try to see and hear this prophet, for if he be not the Promised One of Israel, he must at least be some great messenger sent to us by the God of our fathers."

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CHAPTER XII

MELCHIEL'S FESTIVAL

A CORDIAL welcome awaited Lazarus at the house of Hesron. The day on which he arrived was intensely hot. The Syrian sun resembled a copper ball of fire. The fervid rays had burned up most of the grass, changing the verdant pastures to a dull brown. Along the level ground in front of Hesron's house the hot atmosphere rose in wavy motion, distorting distant objects into a thousand curious shapes.

Sultry as it was, an animated group of young and elderly men were enjoying themselves beneath the shade of the olive trees near the house. Some were discussing the news which had been brought by guests from Tiberias, Damascus, or Jerusalem, for residents of all these places were present to celebrate the marriage feast of Melchiel, the son of Heber, with Leah, the daughter of Hesron and Ruth, of Cana.

Some of the company were laughing and listening to stories; others were proposing or guessing riddles—a favorite pastime with Jewish youth since the days of Samson—while others found pleasure in a species of bowling game, which consisted in trying to place large green apples in certain positions on the smooth grass.

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From within the house, Lazarus heard the sounds of merriment and song and laughter. The Jewish maidens, owing to native modesty, and to the reserve imposed upon them by national custom, did not join promiscuously with the other sex, except, rarely, in the dance. To-day, as many of the guests were strangers, the young women kept apart in that portion of the house allotted to them. Amusements suitable to their age and character were not wanting. The daughters of Israel, ever famous for their beauty of form and poise, possessed fully at this time their traditional power of song. As the friends of the bridegroom amused themselves outside after their own fashion, so the companions of the bride could be heard within repeating portions of the epithalamium, or bridal song, which they had sung before the marriage ceremony:

"Go forth, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the days of his espousals and in the day of the gladness of his heart."

When the singing commenced, the young men stopped their games. Resting under the shade of the trees, they listened to the beautiful canticle, as the liquid, musical sounds floated out through the open casements. While they were delightedly listening, Hesron, the father of the bride, and Gedeon, who was acting, according to Jewish custom, as paranymph, or steward of the feast, for his friend and com-

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panion Melchiel, came out of the house. They had been superintending the final arrangements of the feast for this second day in the marriage festivities which were to last a week.

The silence of respect fell upon the group as the venerable Hesron approached, partly for their esteem for him and partly from expectation, for the younger men had learned from experience that his speech was fraught with wisdom.

"Our young maidens are joyous in their beautiful voices," he said, while stroking his long white beard, "but alas! that of what they sing no longer takes place. Since the great captivity the bridegroom is not crowned at his espousals. When shall our ancient customs be restored to us! When will the glory of Israel return: when, the glory of David and of Solomon!"

"It is now four hundred years since Malachias, the last prophet, appeared among God's chosen people," remarked Heber, the bridegroom's father, "and since that time the Lord appears to have forgotten His people."

"It is true," mused old Hesron, more as if he were communing with himself than addressing the gathering, "it is true the Lord seems to have forsaken us, and yet, since the return from captivity, the Temple services at Jerusalem have never been interrupted but once. Is not this, my friends, a sign that God has not turned away His face from us? Is there not hope for us? Is not this the time when the seventy

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weeks of Daniel have come to an end? God is true. The Messias will soon come and visit His people."

"Yes," replied Elam, a rabbin of Cana, much respected for his learning, "the time of prophecy is full. We now look for the redemption of the chosen race."

"May the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob grant that these old eyes may see the liberation to come," said Hesron, fervently.

"But, reverend sir," asked Melchiel, the bridegroom, "if the God of our forefathers hath not sent a prophet for these many generations, hath He not raised up one in these our own times?"

"Ah! thou meanest this Jesus of Nazareth, of whom so many wonderful things are now being said," replied Hesron. "Nazareth the despised sent forth its Samson, and this Jesus may prove to be a greater prophet than any of the olden time."

At the mention of the name of Jesus, Lazarus received a shock. He became intensely interested. He had heard rumors of several new teachers among the people of late. One, as Ashbael had told him, was teaching a new doctrine based on repentance for sin, beyond the Jordan. Here was another who was moving the people. The age was prolific of great events. On his journey northward he had heard much of this new teacher. It was only when Hesron spoke that he learned the new teacher's name. Could it be the same Jesus

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whom he had seen crowned with roses? Hesron had said he came from Nazareth, a place despised by every Jew of Judea. He thought of the saying of the Gemara, "a generation can have one leader only, not two," and yet Gamaliel of the Temple was a leader of men. The strange preacher beyond the Jordan was also a leader, for if reports were true, he was drawing thousands to hear his mighty voice and tremble at his denunciations. Here, in Galilee, was a third who was gathering around him a company of men, and his fame was spreading throughout the whole land. Lazarus waited eagerly for further information.

"But they say," continued Melchiel, "that the new prophet who is preaching a new doctrine of love in Galilee and Samaria was not born in Nazareth, but in Bethlehem, to the south of Jerusalem, the royal city of our David."

"That is true," replied Hesron. "It was thirty years ago, and Joseph and Mary went to the city of Bethlehem to be registered in the Roman census among their own tribe and family, for they both came of the princely house of David. There Jesus was born."

"There is a tradition in Damascus, where I live," said Ashbael, who had stayed to accompany Lazarus further northward when the wedding festivities should be over, "that wonderful prodigies came to pass on the night this Jesus was born. Our family believes that these

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portents signified that a great prophet had come. Know ye aught of these things, good sir?"

Hesron remained silent a moment or two, as if recalling some long-past event. While the others reverently waited, they saw his face light up with animation:

"Well do I remember that night, my son," he burst forth. "In those days, before the God of Israel had increased my substance, I was a shepherd, watching my master's sheep in the valleys near Bethlehem. Wolves were plentiful in those times, so that the flocks were guarded by night as well as by day. One beautiful, starlit night, in the month of Kisler, when the lamps of the heavens seemed not far off, there appeared over a neighboring hill a great light, brighter than the Shekinah of old—that brightness of God's presence to our forefathers—and all the sheepfolds were illuminated with the glory of its shining. I was too far away at the time to see what was happening. I could not leave my flocks, but after a time I heard sweet music in the air. It far surpassed in grandeur the great singing in the Temple at the time of the greater solemnities. Many of the shepherds, after the heavenly chorus had ceased, hurried away in the direction of Bethlehem. They told me afterward that they saw the newly born Jesus and his mother occupying an old and unused cave-stable on the hillside. When the shepherds returned, their exaltation of mind was very great, each being occupied

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with his own solemn or joyous thoughts, but I could not induce them to tell me much.

"The next day," continued the old man, "I ventured to visit the cave. There I saw the infant and his mother. I shall never forget the holy calm on her face, although she and her husband—one Joseph—with the newly born infant were very poor and apparently forgotten by the people of Bethlehem, or perhaps entirely unknown to them. We poor shepherds afterward took a few pieces of simple furniture, such as we had, and a few comforts, to the cave, for they remained in the grotto for about a month.

"This was the beginning of my acquaintance with Joseph, who told me he had sought accommodation for Mary in the inns, but had been refused. The innkeepers were kindly but prosperous just at that time, and when prosperity shines on one he is not likely to give much attention to the wants of the poor. When I came to live here in Cana and learned that Joseph and Mary still abided at Nazareth, I often visited them. More than once I have made the yearly journey to the Temple in their company. The quiet and simple-hearted Joseph was gathered to his fathers about three years ago."

"Did Mary ever speak to thee of those events?" asked Lazarus with interest, eager to know more.

"Although I often go to Nazareth," replied Hesron, "which, as thou knowest, is only seven

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miles from Cana, and although we have since learned that Ruth, my wife, is a distant relative of Mary, our efforts to induce her to speak of that night at Bethlehem, and all its wonders, have always been unsuccessful. Mary keeps silence, pondering these mysteries all these years in her heart. My wife has sometimes broached the subject. Mary's face will then light up with supreme exultation and joy, but she will never speak of what we wish so much to know. None dare urge her, for she is regarded with great reverence by all. Her serene dignity renders her the most admirable of the mothers in Israel. Ruth invited her to my daughter's nuptial feast, and she is now kindly helping my wife, who, as thou mayest not know, is somewhat lame, in preparing the triclinium for the feast this afternoon."

"The prophet has been invited, too, to grace our festival, has he not?" asked Melchiel. "Surely my marriage with thy daughter will be much honored if this great one come. I remember, sir, how, when I was a boy, I saw him in this very house when he was only twelve years old. His family and mine had just returned from the Passover. Thou didst invite us to rest. We were tired and thirsty from the journey. While you were offering refreshments to the elders I took a chalice of wine from the table and offered it to the young boy. In thanking me, he promised to offer me wine some time during my life. I had forgotten the

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promise until this time. Now I am curious, if he come, to see what will happen."

"Yes, my son," replied Hesron, "both my daughter and thou shall find favor with our God, if this holy prophet grace our board. By the blessing of the Lord we have sufficient food and wine for the week of feasting, I hope."

"What thinkest thou, reverend father, of the other great prophet, who is now somewhere in the desert east of the Jordan?"

The question was put by Ashbael, who appeared to be more interested in John than in Jesus. The latter he had not seen, while he had heard John preach more than once. He continued:

"Many people are now talking of John, who is preaching a baptism of penance. Some think him a second Jonah, calling on the Israelites, as the first called upon the people of Nineve to repent."

"Blessed be the Holy One," said Hesron, piously, "for that when all the world expects the Messias, He has given us a sign, for this John has repeatedly proclaimed that he is but the precursor of one greater than himself."

"Well, I have never seen this great one of whom John speaks," said Ashbael, "but if he come and work some great sign, I will follow him."

"It is said that he hath already wrought great marvels in men's lives by his doctrine," remarked Melchiel.

The conversation, to which nearly all were

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listening with great interest, was interrupted by the arrival of a messenger whom the master of the house had sent along the road to see if the great guest were approaching.

"Good Master," said the messenger, "Jesus, the Nazarene, approaches. With him come a great multitude of people who follow him and hang upon his words. Six men surround him to keep away the press of the throng. Two or three of Bethsaida, whom you know, are with him. By this time they are but an hour's journey away."

Hesron looked across the valley, toward the low hills south of Cana. He saw a large gathering of people slowly descending the slope of a hill. They were enthusiastically following Jesus.

The old man became anxious, and nervously tugged at his white beard. Would this multitude come to his house in the footsteps of the prophet? He thought of the limited amount of wine he had procured for the festivities. Were he to offer refreshment, even to a portion of this multitude, his supply would certainly run short before the week was over.

When the followers had approached within a mile or a mile and a half of Hesron's house, the father of the bride saw Jesus stop and face the gathering. He could not hear what was being said, but was able in the clear atmosphere to discern the enthusiasm of the people and—a moment later—their gestures of dissent. Then Hesron saw the prophet raise his right hand,

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and, for a moment, assume a commanding attitude.

The throng, either awed into submission to his will, or satisfied with the explanation given, drew back, preparing to return the way they had come, but not without casting many longing glances toward the great Nazarene, who was now slowly proceeding toward Hesron's dwelling.

While Jesus and his few companions were yet a good distance away, Hesron and the young men about him had their attention drawn in the opposite direction. A cloud of ever-increasing dust was moving toward them.

"Look! look!" cried Melchiel, nervously, "a company of Roman horse approaching! I will run to the house and tell Leah and her maidens to retire to their own apartments."

Melchiel had no sooner gone within doors than a band of sixty soldiers halted in front of the house."

"Ho! ho! Jove smiles to-day!" said Balbinus, the captain of the troop, to his subordinate officer. "See! here is some Hebrew feast in progress. Dismount, men, and let us see what fortune sends us."

"Good sir," said the officer, addressing Hesron, "we have ridden from Tyre, and the roads are hot and dusty. We crave water for our horses, and of your hospitality, something better for ourselves."

The bride's father knew by experience that the imperious soldiery were not to be denied,

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and that the seemingly civil request implied a command. He, therefore, notwithstanding his vexation at their inopportune arrival, answered with the best grace he could:

"Most worthy captain, let your men lead their horses to the well in yonder field, and rest you here while I bring you wine to drink."

Balbinus gave the order. He and his lieutenant sat in the shade of the olive trees, which afforded them a welcome relief from the burning sun. Hesron sent two men for a skin of wine and goblets. While awaiting their return, Balbinus told his host that he was coming back from Rome with important letters for Pilate, the recently appointed procurator of Judea. Contrary winds had driven his vessel as far north as Tyre. He had intended to land at Joppe. In the former city he had procured an escort of horse and had commenced his journey at once. He finished his narrative by saying:

"And now, my liberal host, inform me of the best road to take."

"Follow the road thy countrymen have made," answered Hesron. "Go through Nazareth, Sichem, Shiloh, and Bethel. The last mentioned town is about ten miles from Jerusalem. The whole distance is about seventy-five miles from this place."

"You appear to know the road well," remarked the officer.

"Be not suspicious. We Jews go every year

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to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice, and I send many caravans that way."

"Ah, here is the wine!" exclaimed Balbinus, as the men-servants approached, one bearing a skin on his shoulder, the other carrying chalices.

"Pour out the wine. Fill the goblet to the brim, and I will offer a libation to Bacchus."

"Good sir, forbear!" said Hesron, earnestly. "Partake of my hospitality and be welcome, but pour no libations to thy gods here."

"Why, old man! Why so much warmth? Is not one god as good as another? Isn't the great Jove or the jolly Bacchus just as good as the god the Jews worship?"

"Nay, nay, ours is the only true God, the Creator of all things. Thine are but false gods."

Balbinus, who was good-natured at heart, neither wishing to enter into discussion—his military training had not fitted him for that species of warfare—nor having any reason for offending his liberal host, quaffed his beverage without performing the customary libation. He did not fail to observe that the pious Jew was much relieved by the omission.

After the soldiers had been liberally served by the men-servants, they mounted their horses and moved away, the captain thanking the master of the house for the hospitable treatment they had received.

As the captain wheeled around to depart, he and his men came suddenly face to face with

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the great prophet and his six disciples. Balbinus was instantly and deeply impressed with the majesty and dignity of the stranger. He gave his men a ringing military command to salute, he himself bending low in his saddle as he passed onward.

"Who can he be?" wonderingly asked the lieutenant. "Never among Rome's greatest have I seen a more kingly bearing."

"Some one of the sages, or prophets of these Jews," answered the captain. "Although they are a conquered race, there is no reason for denying their great men the honor due to greatness. But, look! what means that multitude on yonder hillside. Perhaps some uprising. Let us hasten forward."

The great prophet was welcomed at the house of Hesron with a reverent familiarity which sprang partly from the intimacy of neighbors, and partly from the great reverence which all the land was beginning to entertain for the great teacher, in which Hesron and his guests fully shared with the Galilean people.

The visitor from Bethany was greatly interested in the appearance of the prophet. As Jesus approached, he watched him closely, noting every detail of his personal appearance, hoping to be able to identify him with the rose-crowned boy of twenty years ago.

He observed that the prophet was rather tall and well proportioned, with a tendency to slimness. There was about him an air of serenity and command, attracting the love and rever-

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ence of the seriously-minded son of Siro. The hair was a rich golden-brown, long and falling down to the shoulders. It was parted on the forehead after the manner of the Nazarenes. The forehead was white, broad and high, giving its owner an indescribably noble appearance.

Upon approaching nearer, Lazarus saw that the complexion was so marvelously clear as to resemble the purest alabaster, or Parian marble. The cheeks were faintly tinged with color; the lips had the redness of perfect health. The beard, a shade or two lighter than the hair, was not long, but thick and forked.

The features which most impressed Lazarus were the eyes. They were clear, grey, and piercing. At times they appeared almost blue, changing and deepening in color as they expressed the various emotions of the soul.

Affability and gravity of manner were mingled with a sweet condescension. There was something so love-compelling in the prophet's face that Lazarus felt himself irresistibly drawn toward him, at the same time experiencing a reverence such as he had never felt for any man before, not even for the High Priest of the Temple.

"Surely," spoke Ashbael aloud, for he, too, was greatly affected, "this is no other than the promised Messias of our nation. Is he not fit to command, not only Israel, but the world!"

Lazarus overheard the remark and partially acquiesced, yet not without some regret. In

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the prophet he had failed to recognize the rose-crowned boy-king of the summer night's pastime, to whom he had given his love and who had been the ideal of his youth and early manhood.

Wonderful as this prophet appeared, Lazarus was willing only to accept him as a great teacher sent from God, but not to attribute to him the title of the Messias. His failure to identify him with the youth of Nazareth—his ideal of all that was beautiful and high and holy—made him withhold the full assent of his mind. He felt that to accept this one as the Messias would be disloyalty to the impressions of his youthful days. Oh, if he could but satisfy himself that the rose-crowned king of Nazareth were indeed this prophet of whom the whole land was talking! The young merchant-prince had hoped to be able to do this. Not having succeeded, he was sad. Generous souls can not bestow a divided allegiance.

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CHAPTER XIII

MIRABILIA

LAZARUS, notwithstanding his regret, could not withdraw his eyes from the face and figure of Jesus, who exercised a wonderful influence over all present. Every one paid him marked attention, for, apart from the personal influence he wielded over all, and although there were several persons of importance at the festivities, the prophet was regarded as the chief guest of the feast.

The banquet was now ready. All entered the large triclinium, which was in the center of the building. It contained two rows of pillars, between which the tables were set. Private rooms were entered from three sides of the hall. An arched doorway led to the servants' apartments, from which were brought the viands when all were seated.

Large branches of the grape-vine, with clustering purple bunches still untouched, branches of olive and of palm, and festoons of cedar boughs, graced the walls, pillars, and ceiling of the triclinium, which was flooded with soft light, for at each point where the wreaths were looped there was suspended a lamp. These shed a pleasant glow over the company. They were not actually needed at the beginning of the feast, but their light

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would be necessary long before its close. The tables formed three sides of a hollow square. The couches, on which some of the guests reclined, and the seats, which others preferred, were placed on the outside of the tables.

Gedeon, the groomsman and friend of the bridegroom, acting as paranymph, was now busy directing the guests which places to occupy, or superintending the men-servants who washed the feet of the travelers.

Before the company were all seated, Lazarus witnessed the meeting between the prophet and his mother. They had not seen each other for some time previously, for he had begun his ministry of preaching. The young man from Bethany observed that at this meeting there was no effusiveness. Upon the entrance of Jesus into the triclinium, he saw the features of Mary light up with an ecstatic joy, which appeared for a moment almost to overwhelm her. She stood with her arms outstretched, while Jesus, gravely and with great dignity, walked toward her and saluted her with a kiss on both cheeks.

"My son!" was all that Lazarus heard her say.

"My mother!" was the response, in tones which thrilled the young man, as the word "Peace" had done years before at Nazareth.

The salutation was undemonstrative, attracting but little attention among the guests, yet Lazarus caught a glimpse of the intense love that existed between these two. The prophet

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then proceeded to his seat at the extremity of the table at the right side of the room, in a place of honor reserved for him. Lazarus was gratified to find that the steward had placed him close to the great teacher. He was under the spell of the prophet's presence, and was glad to have the opportunity of hearing all he said. Gedeon had taken his position at the center of the tables so as to be able to see that nothing was wanting to the guests. Mary, in the place of Ruth, had assumed the management of the serving, and at a sign from Gedeon she gave the signal to the maid-servants to bring in the various dishes.

Hesron, at the time of his daughter's marriage, was a wealthy caravan merchant. The feast was abundant, but not extravagant. Fish from the Mediterranean and from the Lake of Galilee, beef, veal, and lamb, honey, and a large variety of fruits and cakes graced the board. The delicate white wheaten bread of Ruth was not forgotten, nor the wine wanting. Hesron had purchased for the occasion some of the excellent wine of Helbon, which was made in Damascus and sold at the fairs of Tyre. There was also palm wine, and a supply from the produce of the red Lorek grape.

The conversation during the feast was animated and joyous, but without approach to boisterousness or even hilarity. Owing to the watchfulness of Gedeon at the tables, and of Mary over the serving men and maids, no one was neglected, nor allowed to remain long

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without some tempting viand being placed before him.

One brow, however, was clouded—one face anxious. Hesron, the master of the house, remembered the visit of the thirsty company of horse that afternoon, and regretted the skins of good red Lorek they had emptied.

Generous of disposition, he did not regret giving the wine, realizing that the friendship of the Roman horse-soldiery was not to be despised at any time, and especially at the present when there were so many petty insurrections up and down the country; yet he could not help regarding it as a misfortune that this troop should have come just at the time of the marriage festivities. Should the wine fail, he would apparently be guilty of a want of hospitality toward his guests. He hoped there would be a sufficient supply for this evening. On the morrow he would send to Damascus or Tyre for more.

As the feast progressed, the host's uneasiness wore away, and he was enabled to forget his anxiety and give himself up to the enjoyment of the occasion.

Lazarus and Ashbael watched the prophet closely. The former did not fail to notice that his disciples were as much under the thrall of their master's influence as he himself had become. The young Jew did not stop to consider causes; nor had he any desire to do so. He was content to give play to the emotions which had been aroused in his soul, fully conscious of a

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burning love and deep veneration for the great prophet. He forgot his disappointment, but gave himself up to the impressions of the hour. He experienced with joy a repetition of those exultant feelings he had felt so many years before at Nazareth. Noble and heroic thoughts, the purest aspirations, were again astir in his soul. He seemed to know and feel that virtue emanated from this great guest, inflaming him with an undefined desire for greater and holier things, at the same time causing him almost to envy the disciples the close companionship they enjoyed with their master.

While the brother of Martha and Mary was feasting his eyes on the comeliness of the great teacher, he saw Mary, after speaking earnestly with Ruth for some minutes, go across the room and speak in a low tone to her son, as she stood behind his seat. Lazarus could not distinctly hear all that was spoken between them, but he saw by her look and gesture that the mother was confidently appealing to the son. He caught a part of the last reply:

"What is that to thee and to me?"

Lazarus was sure the conversation had reference to the question of the supply of wine, for he had seen Mary point to several empty chalices on the tables in front of the guests. Mary then went quietly to some of the servingmen, whose office it had been to carry in the heavier dishes, and said to Ezra, the eldest among them:

"Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye."

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The faithful old servitor bowed. He had great reverence for the mother of the prophet. Mary spoke no more to Jesus. Neither Lazarus nor Ashbael, who both watched her, could understand the look of fullest confidence on her face. It was a look which indicated certainty that her son would comply with her wish.

In one portion of the triclinium, behind the pillars, and near the servants' arched entrance, were six large earthenware jars arranged side by side on a low bench. Although now empty, they usually held water for the legal ablutions and purifications to which the stricter Jews attached so much importance. The capacity of each jar was about twenty-one gallons. There were three taps, or spigots, to each vessel, and by these one was enabled to gauge the amount of water in the jars. These urns, or waterpots, were never moved from the settle for the purpose of being filled, but only when they had to be cleansed or rinsed.

Pointing to these large jars, Jesus said to Ezra:

"Fill the waterpots with water."

The order given was not heard in the general hum of conversation, except by the one addressed and those very near him. As the well was some distance from the house, and about one hundred and twenty gallons of water must be drawn to comply with the command, Ezra collected the men-servants, and they all went to carry in fresh water. In a short time each water jar was filled to the brim under the super-

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intendence of Mary, who had managed that the filling should proceed so unobtrusively that even Gedeon, the feast-master, had not perceived what was being done. Even the watchful eye of Hesron had failed to notice what was taking place.

The low, pleasant hum of conversation, and now, later in the evening, the spontaneous merry laugh were heard, showing that good will and cheerfulness, usually found at Jewish festivals, had place here. Mary now stood a little apart from the tables, her arms folded across her breast expectantly. A look of serene confidence illuminated her beautiful, placid face. The disciples, having heard the order to fill the waterpots, were expectant also. Lazarus was an interested spectator, but he neither knew the reason of the command nor what was its design. Ezra came over to Jesus, and in a low, respectful tone, said:

"Good master, the waterpots are filled to the brim. Shall I tell the servants to wash again the feet of the guests?"

Jesus stretched forth his right hand toward the urns, and said:

"Draw out now and carry to the chief steward of the feast."

The other servants were still standing near the waterpots with the gourds and skins in their hands when Ezra took a large vessel from the table, and placing it upon the ground, turned one of the faucets.

"Look at him!" said one of the men-servants,

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"he has just filled the waterpots with water, and now he is drawing water in a wine ampulla!"

"Will the old man offer water to the master's guests instead of wine?" asked another, amid the laughter of the rest. Those grouped around the old servant were inclined to make sport of him.

"Seest thou not, old man," said a third, "the prophet is making sport of thee for the amusement of the wedding guests?"

"Yes, yes, that is so; drop thy ampulla. Gedeon will surely beat thee when he discovers thou art ridiculing him. Thy shoulders are too old for blows."

Ezra did not heed their remarks. Mastered by a will stronger than his own he filled the wine vessel as he had been directed. He then carried it to Gedeon, who, according to the duties of his office, tasted it before it was offered to the guests. The old man then began to fill the chalices of the guests at the tables.

When the paranymph tasted that which Ezra presented, he was, at first, delighted, subsequently a look of annoyance showed itself on his face. He arose hurriedly and went to where Hesron and Melchiel were reclining.

"Every man," he said, addressing both father and son-in-law, "at first setteth forth good wine, and when they have well drunk, that which is worse. But thou hast kept the good wine until now!"

There was considerable warmth in Gedeon's manner.

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"How sayest thou, Gedeon," asked the bridegroom, who suddenly remembered the strange promise of years before.

"Good wine!" exclaimed Hesron, "what good wine? Unhappily I am afraid my supply will run short. What good wine meanest thou? Speak, Gedeon."

The steward explained that, as master of the feast, the servants had just now brought him a fresh supply of wine to be tasted by him.

"See!" he added, "the servants are now again filling every ampulla and every cup. This is better wine than I have ever before tasted. Thou shouldst have served it first."

"I know not what thou sayest," replied Hesron, almost testily, "nor do I know whence came this generous supply."

Hesron called the chief servant and questioned him:

"Whence came this good wine?"

"My master, I know not. The prophet bade me fill the waterpots with water. This we did. He then told me to draw out and carry to Gedeon, which I have also done."

"And the wine you tasted?" he said, turning to Gedeon.

"Is better than the choicest vintage of Helbon," was the reply.

Hesron was greatly perplexed. He offered another solution.

"Perhaps old Ezra is forgetful and thinks he drew water from the waterpots when in reality

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he found another supply of wine in the storeroom, and is using that."

"Come hither, Ezra," said Melchiel, "and tell the master and us what thou knowest of this wonderful wine."

The old man put down a heavy ampulla from his shoulder and, standing in the hollow square of the tables, began to speak. Many of the guests left their seats and crowded around him. Jesus and his disciples did not move. Mary stood apart from the excited gathering and near her son, on whom she looked with inexpressible gratification. Her triumphant joy strangely affected Lazarus, who, in some inexplicable way, partook of her exultation.

"What I know, reverend sirs," began the old house-servant, "is simply what I have told the master. At the command of the prophet I filled the waterpots with water, and that which I have drawn from them is wine."

"Perhaps you filled all but one, and some one else emptied a skin of wine into the jar," suggested one of the listeners.

"Not so, young sir," replied Ezra; "I saw all the jars filled with water myself."

"This is unaccountable!" exclaimed Hesron, "but it may be that the other jars contain only water."

"Let us see," said Melchiel. Taking a large chalice, he drew it full from the second waterpot. Other guests drew from the remaining jars. In each chalice there was the richest wine.

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"A miracle! a miracle!" exclaimed nearly every one present. There was the intensest excitement for a few minutes. Then a great awe fell upon the assembled company.

"Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers who hath shown mercy toward us, and hath sent his prophet amongst us," said Hesron, with deepest enthusiasm, turning toward Jesus.

The great Nazarene arose and stood in the middle of the company. At this moment the excitement of enthusiasm, not unmixed with awe, reached its climax. The grave yet sweet demeanor of the prophet had influenced all. All realized that his presence had elevated the nature of the feast. With this wonderful miracle before their eyes, all were more than ever impressed with the majesty of him who had wrought it. Suddenly Melchiel, as if to find vent for his overwrought feelings, burst forth into song in one of the Psalms of David:

"Come, let us praise the Lord with joy; let us joyfully sing to God our Savior."

He had struck the right chord of the human heart. Others spontaneously took up the beautiful refrain:

"Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise to him with praise.

"For the Lord is a great God; and a great King above all gods," sang Melchiel again, to which the others responded:

"In his hands are all the ends of the earth; and the heights of the mountains are his."

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While the awe-stricken company were thus finding relief for their emotion, Mary stood quietly by, silent and unobserved. Tears of joy were coursing down her cheeks. Lazarus, almost overcome by the scene and the emotions it had evoked, approached the prophet.

"Good master, art thou he whom I saw crowned with roses in childish sport, years ago at Nazareth?"

Jesus looked long and lovingly into the face of the son of Siro, and replied:

"I am."

"But how——" hesitatingly began Lazarus.

"To thy troubled doubts—peace," was the answer to the unspoken question. The same word as of long ago, and with the same power! Lazarus felt its influence. All disappointment had fled. A rush of gladness filled his being. Doubt was gone; love was paramount.

"Master, I will follow thee!"

Jesus looked on the young man lovingly, his marvelous eyes reading his very soul, searching every thought and inundating him with love overmastering. In this searching glance the prophet read the beautiful simplicity of the son of Siro's character, and he chose him for his friend.

Lazarus, unable longer to restrain his pent-up emotion, fell upon his knees, and exclaimed:

"I believe thou art the Messias of God, sent to redeem Israel!"

"Believest thou this?" asked Jesus, in a low, musical tone.

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"Yea, master, and I will follow thee always."

"Blessed art thou in thy faith, but, nay, that may not be. Thou shalt be my friend and in thy house will I take rest and consolation. Thy sisters need thy protection."

Lazarus was surprised that Jesus should know his family circumstances. They had never spoken together before. Impressed with the fact that this knowledge was more than human, Lazarus exclaimed:

"Thou art more than a prophet. I believe thou art the son of God."

"Blessed art thou, O son of Siro; henceforth thou and thy sisters shall be my friends. Return to Bethany, for thy sister Mary shall need thy help. I will come and rest with thee."

And the faith of Lazarus, whom Jesus loved and called friend, never wavered in all the dark days that were to come.

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CHAPTER XIV

MARY

THE great good that had come to Lazarus at the marriage feast of Cana of Galilee changed the tenor of his life. Henceforth he entertained different views of life and religion, of home and near and dear ones. Within his soul, from that time, there was a ringing joy which permeated his whole being. To be the acknowledged friend of the great prophet, whom he fully believed to be the son of God, was in his own estimation so great an honor as to sink riches, love of sisters, the credit of a great name—everything—into insignificance in comparison with it.

Lazarus had always been a thoroughly religious Jew. Even in his early youth the piety of his character had been evident. His study of the Scriptures as a child, and, as he grew older, the reading of the law, with the pure and devout life he had always lived—if these things did not actually predispose him to make his remarkable acknowledgment of faith in the divinity of Christ, they at least left his heart without obstacle in the way of that important act. He was not the only one in that little company at Cana who believed in the divine nature of the great prophet, but he was of the earliest among the disciples to make

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public profession of faith. The Lord's choice of him as friend after this profession gives him a unique place in history.

Upon his return journey from Damascus, whither he had gone immediately after the marriage feasting at Cana, he found night overtaking him at Arimathea, a town a few miles north of Jerusalem. Here he visited one Joseph, an old and valued acquaintance of his father, and claimed a friend's hospitality for the night. At the house of this friend he heard rumors which caused him the greatest uneasiness.

"Knowest thou aught of thy sister Mary?" asked Joseph of Arimathea.

"I have heard nothing of my sisters for nearly a month," replied Lazarus. "Thy question oppresses my heart! Hath aught befallen her?"

The great teacher's warning of Mary's need flashed through his memory and he became very anxious.

"Nothing hath befallen her as yet," replied he of Arimathea, who had broached the subject as they sat at the evening meal, "but many of thy friends, and, alas! many who are not thy friends, are busy-tongued concerning her."

"In what way, good Joseph?" asked Lazarus, his heart sinking with forebodings that some indiscretion had been committed by his beautiful but self-willed and variable sister.

"Rumor hath it that Mary's great beauty hath captivated the heart of Decius, the com-

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mander of the troops under Pilate in Jerusalem. People say that he is madly in love with her, and hath sworn by his gods to make her his wife."

Lazarus laughed a laugh of relief.

"If that be the substance of thy rumor, O Joseph, let thy mind take rest, although I thank thee for thy solicitude. Mary is a daughter of Israel. She will not give her heart nor her hand to one not of her faith and race. Her father's very bones would turn in their grave if such a thing were possible! Entertain thou no fear for her, good Joseph."

"Would that there were no occasion for fear," remarked Joseph, reluctant to convey bad news. "Rumor—and thou well knowest how quickly it groweth—rumor hath it that thy sister is by no means averse to the attentions which are being paid by this handsome Roman —for handsome he is, as a Greek statue. His manners are winning, and I fear his blandishments will early gain over so simple a nature as thy sister's. If reports from Rome speak truly, this young man is no tyro in affairs of the heart. I hear more things here than thou wouldst at Bethany. As thy friend, and an old friend of thy father, I urge thee to hasten to Bethany and avert an evil which would sadden the hearts of many."

Lazarus as he listened grew very serious. Joseph's manner was too earnest for the other to doubt the sincerity of his apprehensions. That there was any likelihood that Mary would

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transgress the law of her nation, and marry a disbeliever in the true God, when the Mosaic law was so explicit in its prohibition, Lazarus could not bring himself to believe, although here was an aged and staid friend of the family gravely and with deliberation announcing his worst fears.

"Dost thou believe the report, good Joseph?"

He of Arimathea hesitated before answering. He did not wish to wound the feelings of Lazarus, nor unnecessarily alarm him, yet he was fully persuaded that the rumor had but too solid a foundation. His belief in the danger to which Mary was exposed was confirmed by the number and the circumstantiability of the reports brought him. He grieved sincerely for his old friend's daughter, whom he had known from her earliest childhood. He knew her impatience of control, her headstrong character. In his heart he believed that she would be capable of throwing aside all restraints of religion and law, if her heart had been really captivated. Had her heart gone out to this polished young pagan? Recent rumors, none of which reached Lazarus during his absence in the north, had again and again affirmed that, to all appearances, she was encouraging him. What answer could Joseph of Arimathea make to Lazarus? The former's reverence for the memory of a lifelong friendship with the young man's father, and his desire to avert what every Jew would consider a catastrophe decided him to speak plainly.

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"To be entirely honest with thee, O Lazarus, I must acknowledge that I have reason to believe the report concerning thy sister's infatuation is but too well founded. I am told the rumor is quite general within the last few days in the Holy City. Her name to-day is on thousands of lips, while thy friends have to bite their own in silence, unable to offer contradiction."

"I will start immediately for Bethany," said Lazarus, hastily rising from the unfinished meal.

"Nay! nay! shame not my hospitality. Remain at least one night under my roof, which thy father often honored. Thou hast traveled far to-day and art weary. Stay, I beseech thee."

Lazarus would not allow himself to be persuaded. It was not late. The sun had not long sunk below the horizon. He would reach Bethany before midnight. He continued his journey at once, offering many apologies to his kindly host for his abrupt departure.

Earlier in the same day on which the unpleasant intelligence came to Lazarus, another scene had been enacted in Jerusalem, of vital importance to him and his sisters in consequence.

The passion for gambling had taken a strong hold on Pilate, the present governor of Judea. In his splendid palace, close to the Temple, one hall was entirely devoted to this purpose. It was sumptuously furnished. The floor was in-

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laid with white and colored marble tiles. The windows and entrances were hung with purple curtains edged with gold fringe, shutting out the light of day and helping to deaden the sound of the rattling of the dice. The hall was lighted by large silver lamps suspended by long chains of the same metal from the arched ceiling. Numerous sconces were placed along the walls and on the purple, red, and green polished porphyry pillars. Reflectors were so arranged as to throw the light directly on the tables where the games of hazard were played.

The passion for gambling had permeated every grade of the Roman legionaries at this time. Nowhere in the empire, even in Rome itself, had it been carried to greater excess than in Jerusalem while that city was under the governorship of Pontius Pilate.

Decius and the procurator, on the day in question, had been playing for several hours with varying success. Pilate, who, in the aggregate, had won largely, observed that his friend was distracted, seemingly unable to give his attention to the game he loved so much.

"Curses attend the dice!" at length exclaimed the soldier. "I play no more to-day. Boy, bring some wine."

He took the golden cup and drank. Turning to Pilate, he said:

"I fain would consult with you, most noble Pilate, on a matter of great import."

The procurator was in good humor, as men

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are apt to be after winning many sesterces. He answered good-naturedly:

"As you will, O son of Mars. Let us go to yonder alcove where we shall not be overheard."

Crossing the hall, and pulling aside the heavy curtain, the two found themselves in the glare of broad daylight. Letting the curtain drop to its place to shut out the noise of the dice on the marble tables and the shouts of the excited players, Pilate pointed to a high pile of cushions, and then took his seat opposite his military friend.

"Now, dear Decius," he said, "may the gods remove thy trouble—for trouble I see thou hast—and send me a share of Minerva's wisdom with which to counsel thee. That something preys upon thy mind I can see by thy face, which lacks its accustomed joyousness. Hast forgotten thy libation to the gods, thou pious one!"

Decius sat moodily silent while Pilate continued banteringly:

"Dost want letters of divorce from thy wife Lellia whom thou hast left behind in Rome?"

The soldier started; an angry red showed beneath the tan of his face.

"Thou readest men's minds well! I do not think thou wouldst refuse me that—when——"

"When?" interrupted Pilate, in that teasing way some men assume when they have power.

"When without legal divorce—for so rumor hath it of thee in Rome—thou hast left thine

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own wife in that city, and hast another here, she thinking thou wert unmarried."

Pilate grew angry. He had heard this rumored of him many times of late. Whether it were true or false, he had never deigned to say one word about it, even to his most intimate friends. Decius saw the anger gather on his brow, but it did not disconcert him. He prided himself on giving expression with soldierly brusqueness to whatever thoughts came to his mind.

"It is not divorce letters I ask of thee, O Pilate, for the gods have been propitious. The courier brings me news of the death of Lellia."

"What! the beautiful Lellia dead!" exclaimed Pilate; "may Charon give her quick passage across the river!"

"I might have asked the favor of a divorce from thee, most noble governor, had not this letter relieved me of the necessity."

"Ah! a fairer face!"

"Aye! none fairer! Juno was not more divinely beautiful!"

"And who hath won the latest favor of our garrison's Adonis?" asked Pilate, in mock seriousness.

"'Tis a Jewish maid."

Pilate gave a long, low whistle—whether in surprise at his choice or the idea of his inability to win her, or what the governor might consider his audacity in such a place as Jerusalem, Decius could not decide.

"Thou wilt never win her! These Jews are

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a stubborn race. Knowest thou not that they would as soon die as break one of the laws of their Moses?"

"I swear by the Twin Gods that I will win her," said the soldier, passionately.

"Thou art more clever than I take thee if thou succeed."

"Thinkest thou so? We shall see. What puzzles me now," he said, in changing mood, "is which marriage to offer her."

"If thou canst get her wilt thou not marry her according to the Jewish rites?" asked Pilate.

"Of these I am ignorant," answered Decius, "and it seems impossible, for their High Priest would prevent it."

"Quite true. Knowest thou the manner of their marrying? No? It is this. The Jewish marriage consists essentially of the espousals, and then the going of the woman to the house of her husband. The latter part, friend Decius, would be easy enough for thee, but the espousals are publicly performed, either in the Temple or in a synagogue. In either case it would be amusing to see a Roman—the son of a patrician—attempt the ceremony. The whole excitable populace would rise and fume with indignation. Our ancestors were successful with the Sabine women. Thou wouldst not be so with this Jewess. Thou wouldst have to fight the fathers and brothers and all the male kinsmen of the tribe to which she belonged."

"Tell me," said Decius, "of the Roman kinds of marriage. I know little of our own customs

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in this. I took my wife Lellia by the *matrimonium confarreatis,* by which I bought her for bread. I engaged a flamen, and he arranged all the details. I did not concern myself about what the auguries read in the swine's entrails, nor make a present to Juno of its gall. I paid my flamen well, and, of course, all the auspices were favorable. But are there other marriages? This beauty, I am sure, would not consent to have anything to do with swine."

"Yes. There is a marriage by Roman law of mutual buying, where each party buys the other, and this forever."

"Forever! thanks; I want it not."

"Not but what," continued Pilate, "a sufficient number of sesterces, or even boli, would be a sufficiently potent factor in breaking the bonds legally."

"So! so!" laughed the soldier, and added with a slight touch of sarcasm, " 'tis thus thou speakest of our sacred laws! Well?"

"If thou art not satisfied with this there is another marriage which the jurisconsults call the *matrimonium consuetudine.* Thou canst understand this. It depends upon the mutual satisfaction of the parties. If both get along they are man and wife by prescription, if not, they are free."

"That appears——"

"To suit thee best. I thought it would. Thou dost not expect to remain long in Palestine, and, to speak plainly, it would not be surprising if this infatuation of thine for the Jewess,

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be she ever so charming, would not go to the extent of taking her to Rome with thee and introducing her to thy patrician world."

Pilate was an evil counselor.

"I know not," said the other, slowly. "At all events, I must convince her that it is to be a true marriage, or I am sure I shall never win her. She is as beautiful as Helen, although of a different type, yet worth another Troy. She is the most queen-like woman I have ever gazed upon."

"What is she like?" asked Pilate, curiously.

"Somewhat tall. Her forehead is broad and intelligent, and generally adorned with a row of gold coins. Her face is a pure oval of the best Jewish type. Dark hair and eyebrows are in contrast with the purest and clearest skin I have ever seen in a woman. Her large black eyes are shaded by sweeping lashes, making them as curtained stars. Her nose is straight and not too long. Her lips are exquisitely formed, the pearly whiteness of her teeth setting them off to best advantage. The poise of her head, her whole port—ah! Juno was not more graceful!"

"Truly a lover's rhapsody," laughingly exclaimed Pilate. "Could Horace have heard thy description he would have written thee an ode for her. But who is this Jewish Helen who hath so caught thy latest fancy? Liveth she in Jerusalem?"

"No; and that reminds me, O noble procurator. I beg of thee to grant me leave of absence

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from the Tower of Antonia until to-morrow's sun. If I am successful in my suit, I shall apply for two months' leave of absence. To-night I meet her at her own house."

Pilate's brow clouded and he looked displeased. He was always careful that military discipline be not infringed upon, especially with regard to the watches of the garrison, upon which he well knew depended his own safety and that of all the emissaries of Rome.

"Where dwelleth she?" he asked.

"To-night I ride to Bethany to see this beautiful one again," said Decius. "I have staked much on this evening's meeting. I intend to get her consent before her brother returns from the north; that is," he continued blandly, "if thou, good Pilate, grantest me leave of absence, which I ask in memory of our boyhood's friendship."

These two had been friends all their lives. Decius knew that the governor was very fond of him, and rarely refused him anything he asked.

"I give thee leave, Decius, for whatever time thou desirest. Thou hast not yet told me the name of her who hath captivated thy heart."

"Thanks, most generous governor. She is Mary, the sister of Lazarus, of Bethany."

"What! what!" exclaimed Pilate, "the daughter of the dead Siro—he who was the wealthiest silk-merchant here! By the great Thunderer! if thou win her thou canst gamble for the rest of thy days without fear that thy

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purse shall ever be empty! Knowest thou not that she is one of the richest heiresses in her own right in all Syria?"

"If I win her not," said Decius, as the two reentered the gambling hall, "it shall not be through lack of endeavor."

Lazarus, when he so hastily left the hospitable roof of Joseph, made slower progress than he desired. Arimathea lay on the western side of a range of low hills running north and south, about midway between the Jordan and the Mediterranean. The distance to Bethany, as the crow flies, was not more than fifteen miles, but owing to the uneven country necessitating a detour to the town of Bethel, it was close upon twenty-three. While urging his horse somewhat recklessly through a rocky hill pass, the animal became lame, and the speed of his journey was, in consequence, much retarded.

Thoroughly alarmed by what he had learned, he greatly desired to be at Bethany at the earliest possible moment, to counsel and protect his sister, and, if need be, to reprove and restrain her. During the slow hours of the night journey he took courage in the belief that she was too well versed in the law of Israel, and too loyal to it, to be in danger of consenting to a marriage with one not of the Promise. One of the many injunctions of the Mosaic law rang in his ears again and again as he urged his horse along in the darkness.

"Neither shalt thou make marriages with

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them. Thou shalt not give thy daughter to his son, nor take his daughter for thy son. For she will turn away thy son from following me that he may rather serve strange gods; the wrath of the Lord will be enkindled and will quickly destroy thee."

He thought of the troubles of Samson from his Philistine wife, Delilah; he thought of Solomon and how he was led into idolatry by his pagan wives, and of many other examples of the evils arising from marriage by the people of God's chosen race with surrounding idolaters. Would Mary's faith be strong enough to resist the enticements and blandishments of a polished Roman who might be honestly and earnestly in love with her? For aught he knew she might, even now, be madly in love with this officer. People often put their infatuation above expediency, duty, and even God Himself. He hoped, by the memory of Eucharia and of Siro, that his sister would remain true to the religion of her race. He hoped that Mary would allow no blind passion of the heart to lead her to take a step that would necessarily bring with it a lifetime of remorse. He prayed, as he rode his lame horse slowly along, that if it came to the worst, that worst might not be more than the breaking of the Mosaic law, and not the loss of her faith in the true God.

If the reports were true which Joseph of Arimathea had given him, she, being blindly infatuated with the Roman, might determine to do what thousands of women have done, and

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will continue to do—marry the one without whom they imagine they could never be happy, risking present and future happiness for a handsome face, or a clever tongue, regardless of the ever-repeating lessons which point to numberless marital shipwrecks, and regardless of wounding nigh unto death those nearest and dearest to them.

With such anxious thoughts crowding in upon his mind, Lazarus urged his horse along the road. He had passed through Bethel, or rather, as the gates were closed, he had passed around the walls of the town, and had taken the road leading directly to Jerusalem, when, in the still night air, he heard some distance ahead of him, the ringing of horses' hoofs on the hard metal road. Peering into the darkness he caught the reflection of the moon on the glitter of lances. A company of Roman horse were approaching.

Not wishing to be accosted or molested by the imperial guards, who he knew kept patrol around the Holy City at night with more or less regularity, he turned off the main road and went into the shadow of some heavy-foliaged fruit trees in an orchard near by. He was not more than a hundred feet from the main thoroughfare, and in the dark shade could see distinctly, without being seen.

As they approached he saw there were about thirty soldiers in the company. They trotted along at an easy gait, for in the midst of them was a species of litter supported on two long

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poles fastened to the harness of the horses, one in front and one behind.

This carriage without wheels was evidently occupied, for Lazarus from his hiding place saw the officer in charge ride up to its door, and bend low upon his horse, as if making inquiry as to the comfort of the one within.

"What midnight escapade is this?" thought Lazarus, wonderingly, as the troop passed on and out of sight. "Perhaps it is some noble Roman lady who prefers to travel in the cool of the night rather than in the hot sun; or perhaps it is some one being carried away by force."

Neither Pilate, nor his officers, if reports bruited about were true, were guiltless of spiriting away members of wealthy families, either for political reasons, or for hope of ransom, or even for worse causes.

In this case, Lazarus perceived that if it were an abduction, it was a willing one, for as the cortège passed him, the watcher beneath the apple trees saw the lady thrust out her jeweled hand and wave it gracefully to the man on horseback, who bowed low in his saddle again, and dropped behind the escort he commanded.

The passing of the cavalcade did not create much impression on the mind of the young merchant. He was worried and anxious about his sister, and this filled his thoughts. Such things as he had just witnessed, he knew, were not uncommon even among some of his own people. Ever since he had been old enough to

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observe things, he had seen how the Roman occupation had been gradually changing Jewish thought and manners, and to some extent, even customs. Much of the old time reverence for parents and for religious practices was being lost sight of, or sneered at. Young Jews, who only a few years before were boys with him going to the classes in the Temple, now mixed freely with the Roman contingent of the Holy City's somewhat cosmopolitan population. This was especially the case with those youths whose families were wealthy. Riches—the key which unlocks the portals of the most exclusive circles in all times and all the world over—gained for them admission to the society of the officers of the Roman garrison, and to the gambling hall in Pilate's palace. In such places the young Jews learned all they should not, and easily forgot the training of their youth.

Lazarus resumed his journey in a meditative mood, his mind often reverting to the great prophet. He wondered whether he, whom he had confessed to be divine a few days before, would change all this, when he should declare, as he certainly would, his power and divinity before the world. It was with Lazarus as with every other believer in Jesus. He had at this time but a very imperfect comprehension of the spiritual kingdom Christ had begun to establish, but, with all the rest of the believers who were now gathering around the great teacher, he fully expected to see the kingdom of Israel restored.

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When he finally arrived at Bethany much later than he had expected, owing to the misfortune happening his horse, he was surprised to see lights burning in almost every room of the castle. Some great commotion was taking place within. Tapers were being carried from room to room. Shadows passed hurriedly before the lattices. Some one was being searched for. Shouts and callings were heard, especially from the apartments allotted to the slaves and servants. Men were running to and fro in front of the house, as if uncertain what to do. All was commotion and confusion.

The traveler hastily dismounted, giving his horse to one of the servants whose attention he with difficulty attracted. Running to the impluvium, where, amid all this confusion, he thought he would most probably find his sisters, Martha and Mary, he was amazed to see the former on a pile of cushions, face downward, her head resting on her arms, with hair disheveled, and in an abandon of grief. Ever and anon she would rend the air with her shrieks, or tear her garments in the excess of her sorrow.

"Patience, my mistress; give not away under this affliction. Bear up, even for thy brother's sake," Lazarus heard the faithful Nigrita say to her. A little ancilla, kneeling beside her mistress, affectionately stroked her hand, in a mute attempt at imparting consolation. Martha's grief was beyond the comprehension of the

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little maid. The sorrowful sister had buried her face in the cushions, while violent sobs shook her frame.

For a moment or two, Lazarus, unnoticed, stood over the group. He then gently touched the ancilla on the shoulder. Instantly recognizing him, she cried:

"O mistress! mistress! be comforted. The master has come. Dry thine eyes. Lazarus is here. Wilt thou not arise and welcome him?"

At the words of the handmaid, the generally placid and prudent Martha looked up. Hastily arising from her prone position, she rushed to her brother's arms.

"Oh! my brother! my Lazarus! may the Holy One be praised that thou art come! How shall I tell thee all! It is a sorrowful night for thee and for me. If our father——"

Her emotions seemed to choke her, and she remained too mournful for words.

"Speak, my sister; tell me all that hath come to pass," said Lazarus, gently laying his stricken sister's head on his shoulder. Even while encouraging her, he felt a dread foreboding of evil—a verification of the Arimathean's suspicions.

"Gone! gone! she has fled! The soldiers—Pathira heard them—we were too late—she has gone! We have lost her. She is forever lost! lost! lost!"

"Be calm, my Martha; who has gone?"

"Mary! She told me to-day that—oh! I

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thought she was making a pastime for us in thy absence—that the commander of the garrison had offered her marriage! Oh! my sister! my sister!"

"Who is he?"

"Decius!"

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CHAPTER XV

DUST AND ASHES

INTENSE was the grief of Martha and of Lazarus in the days that followed. They consoled each other as best they might, but neither could see in Mary's flight aught but the direst misfortune.

The kind of marriage she had chosen to make did not necessarily destroy her respectability. Decius, as far as the world knew, was ranked among the eminently respectable of Roman society. It was said in Jerusalem that he was an only son, and that his father possessed an elegant villa near the Via Sacra, and that his family was reckoned at least among the lesser patricians of the Mistress of the World.

The young bazaar merchant, however, took a different, and a higher view. More weighty matters than the world's opinions or judgments weighed with him. That a daughter of Israel —one brought up in the strict observance of the law, looked up to on account of the enviable position she held in the community, who had been granted by her father, and in later years, by her brother, all that heart could wish or fancy desire—that one possessing all these advantages should have gone contrary to all Jewish tradition, and against the positive law of Moses, was to Lazarus a poignant sorrow. His

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grief would have been unbearable had not other thoughts at this time largely occupied his mind and prevented him from dwelling too exclusively on his domestic affliction. He could not forget the worker of the wonderful miracle at Cana, even though his forebodings of a great evil about to befall Mary haunted him like a specter.

He knew the fickleness of the Romans. He knew, too well, their contempt for his people. What guarantee had he that this Decius, who after all, was base enough to steal away his sister in his absence, intended more than the *matrimonium consuetudine,* by which he could cast her off as soon as his changing fancy tired of her charms? If the marriage contracted were the most legally binding in Roman law, did not Lazarus know full well that divorce was easy of attainment?

He hoped against hope that such a misfortune would not come to Mary. Should it happen, what would be the effect upon her? With her peculiar temperament, and the changeableness of character she had so often shown; with her restless disposition, which was always looking for something beyond, and never satisfied with present conditions and present duties—her brother trembled for her future should this soldier play her false. He knew that there were immense possibilities for good in Mary, but he fully realized that they could be turned into instrumentalities for evil should her will be thwarted, or should she meet with injury.

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Unfortunately her brother's worst fears were realized. The leave of absence indulgently granted by Pilate to his favorite having expired, Decius was again in Jerusalem at his post.

"And thy Jewish Hebe?" asked Pilate, the first time they met.

"We passed our honeymoon in Tiberias. I had little difficulty in persuading her that the ceremony of Roman marriage—at least such as I provided for her, a lot of singing women and torches—would be satisfactory both to the Emperor and to her brother. Soon, however, the little fool developed a remarkable temper of her own and I——"

"Little fool!" interrupted Pilate, in unfeigned surprise; "and yet I ought not to be astonished. O tempora! times have suddenly changed with thee, O thou fickle one!"

"My noble procurator," said Decius, "a pear is sometimes more entrancing when it hangs blushing on the branch than it is between the teeth. When, about a week ago, I intimated that my furlough was drawing to a close, and that I must soon return to my command in Jerusalem, she seemed overjoyed at the thought, and began considering which of her wealthy brother's houses we should occupy, and how we should furnish it. If her plans had been carried out, 'tis certain that her brother would be a much poorer man than he is now. Her ideas were princely."

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"Well? well?" said Pilate, when Decius paused. He was anxious to know more.

"But when I intimated the impossibility of my living outside the Tower of Antonia away from my command, and intimated that she had better remain in Tiberias—great Jove! there was a scene!"

Pilate laughed loudly, seemingly enjoying the brutal recital.

"I always knew these beautiful Jewish women, with eyes as dark as plums, were fiery in temper, but thou shouldst have seen her! She was positively magnificent in her rage—an infuriated lioness! I thought she would have murdered me with the little jeweled dagger she carried in her cincture. Well, in high dudgeon she packed off to the castle at Magdala. I followed her, but was refused admittance or audience. She is there now. Thou knowest she owns this castle and much land around it, and 'tis said she is keeping open house in queenly style."

Decius mused in silence for a time, stroking his well-cared-for mustache. Pilate watched him, with an amused smile on his face, knowing that he had a missive for him from the Emperor, but unable to guess how it would be received under the circumstances. It was evident that Decius had been thinking of Mary, for he began to express aloud his thoughts in broken phrases:

"Magnificent!—yet when angry, Medea-like,—truly, tragically magnificent! sorry to

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lose her—oh! yes—I can satisfy her brother, or get him out of the way should he prove troublesome—most marvelous eyes I ever saw —Jove!—but thou knowest I could not bring her here to the garrison."

"Thou needest not worry about her brother, or about her, Decius, for I have an imperial mandate for thee which will settle everything. Thou art ordered to Rome to take charge of a legion."

Pilate handed him the sealed package, having learned its contents from a duplicate sent to himself. Decius, when he recognized the Emperor's seal, gave a military salute. Having read the letter, he folded it and placed it inside his belt.

"Yes, my good friend Pilate," he said, "this smoothes my course. I could not possibly take this Hebrew woman with me—rich and beautiful though she be—could I? But she was grand in her fury though!"

And Mary? Disappointed and bitter at heart; ashamed to go back to Bethany; longing for peace and reconciliation with her brother and sister, yet not having the will power to seek it; not fearing, but rather defiantly despising the reproachful looks which she knew would be directed toward her by all who should learn her story, she found, in the first hours of her deserted and unhappy condition that she had not the courage to return to the home of her childhood.

She bethought herself of her own property

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at Magdala and repaired thither. Unfortunately, instead of living there in retirement, and preparing herself to return to the peaceful security of her brother's house, she pursued the very opposite course. Ever restless, and doubly so now, she invited all who would come to her board, dispensing lavish hospitality to indiscriminate guests of a town noted even in the Talmud for the corruption and voluptuousness of its inhabitants.

With eyelashes leaded, and cheeks painted, arrayed in gorgeous finery, for several months, in a wild delirium, as it were, she turned night into day. This epoch in her life—short as to duration—was intense in all that which the votaries of pleasure call life. Her one desire, to which all her energies were directed, was to forget Decius. To effect this she mistakenly surrounded herself with men and women as unprincipled as he was.

In the beginning, her love for the Roman had been genuine, even though infatuated, carrying her along regardless of all consequences, causing her to estrange herself from those whom she loved most, and in some way even from her religion; but now, when she bitterly realized how mutable was human love, and how fickle was the one to whom she had confided herself, she conceived a positive hatred for Decius, and a passionate desire to forget even his name. He had called her magnificent in her anger. She was majestic in her scorn.

When the human heart is sore and bleeding

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from some great disappointment, two courses of action suggest themselves. The one is a reckless oblivion, or simulation of oblivion, in present pleasures, with the hope of smothering the sting in the memory of wounded self-love; the other is a humble sorrow and a turning to the consoling and strengthening power of religion. The latter will not be resorted to by the sufferer, unless the tenor of life has been on the plane of the religious. In critical moments of life the habit of years will assert itself.

The household of Siro had been a pious one. From youth both Martha and her brother had been pious in heart and thought. With Mary there was a difference. She had a marvelous capacity for love. Hers was an impulsive nature, such as all strongly loving natures are, but her actions were generally controlled rather by impulse than any other motive. Environment had a great deal to do with Mary's conduct, and up to the time when she had conceived a real and true love for this officer, her outward bearing had conformed to the general tone pervading the household at Bethany. Interiorly, she had often rebelled at the restraints of her home life. She longed for freedom. When she obtained it by her clandestine departure, she imagined she had attained to perfect bliss, only to discover that the world had soon turned to dust and ashes on her lips. As might be expected from one of her ardent nature, she turned into the path of distraction and amuse-

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ment, trying thus to drown the memory of her bitter disappointment. How did she succeed?

Strong natures do not go half way. Mary sought every kind of excitement. Tiring of that which the nightly banquets, with all their lavish luxury, afforded, she went further afield in search of amusement and pleasure. Tiberias was but a few miles south of Magdala, and Bethsaida, and Capharnaum and Corozaim were to the north. She now often visited these cities, and even on one or two occasions went so far as Jerusalem.

Wherever she traveled she created a flutter of excitement, her equipage being so gorgeously elaborate. Wise men, grieved to see how rapidly she was dissipating her inheritance, shook their heads as she passed and called her the prodigal daughter. Many mothers wept for Mary's mother and at the thought of her grief, not knowing that Eucharia, by death, had been saved this sorrow. They were fain to obstruct their daughters' view as the splendid cavalcade was passing, lest the magnetic beauty of Mary should tempt their offspring to a desire of following in her train, or at least of becoming dissatisfied with their own simplicity of attire and of manners, and adopt a more extravagant and a more dangerous way of living.

In her journeys Mary never traveled alone. She was surrounded by men of nearly all ages; from the youth who but a few months ago had left the schools to men who had passed the

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meridian of life. All flattered and fawned upon her, eager to pay willing court to one whose abundant table and indiscriminate welcome gave them pleasure without expense to themselves.

This period of dissipation, of late hours, of strong wines and of perpetual excitement and distraction would have ruined the beauty of any ordinary woman, but Mary grew more magnificently beautiful day by day, and as the charms of her face increased so did her desire to make further conquests and attract more attention.

One day Mary had come to Bethsaida from Magdala, surrounded by her retinue. Her entrance into this town on the northern shore of the sea of Tiberias, resembled an almost royal procession, causing an unwonted sensation even among the immoral people of that place. She learned there that the great prophet, about whom every one was now speaking, was preaching on the shore of the lake between Bethsaida and Capharnaum. The flatterings of those constantly surrounding her were beginning to pall. She would seek a new excitement. She would go out to the grass-clad shore and see what the prophet had to say. It would be a distraction for her, and she could at least show the multitude the splendor of her beauty and the grandeur of her appointments.

She ordered her litter to be in readiness. To save her face from becoming tanned by the

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sun and wind she had covered it with a mask of paint. Her eyebrows and lashes were darkened with antimony, and her cheek bones reddened. She had ordered the horses of her litter to be stabled. They were replaced by two Numidian dwarfs, with the heads, and arms, and chests of giants. Their broad shoulders and thick, powerful necks were in strange contrast to their diminutive height. They were bare to the waist and their black, oily skin shone in the sun like polished ebony. When Mary, in her latest caprice, secured the service of these two, she ordered all the cushions and hangings of the litter to be changed for white silk. Thus her own sensuous beauty, her crimson silk robe as fine as gauze and clinging to her figure, the broad sash of yellow silk with fringed ends reaching to her sandaled feet, a double row of gold discs across her forehead, her hands covered with rings, and ankles and wrists ornamented with trinkets of value, were all in striking contrast to the pure white furnishings of her litter. The whole effect was further heightened by contrast with the ebony-hued Numidians, who, as litter-bearers, were in close proximity. Slave girls with bare arms except for brass wristlets, fanned their mistress with large peacock feathers fastened on short bamboo poles. Within the litter was a supply of perfumes and a zither, the strings of which the mistress occasionally touched with her delicate fingers, while she cast languishing eyes upon those whom the splendor of her

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traveling arrangements or the musical chords attracted.

When Mary arrived at the level meadow where the prophet was speaking to the multitude it was mid-afternoon. Many hundreds of Galileans were gathered on the lake shore. The great prophet stood on a slight elevation, commanding a view of the upturned faces. His disciples were with him. Three or four were standing behind him, while those in front had seated themselves on the ground as had many of the people. Vehicles and men on horseback were on the edge of the crowd. Mary, desirous of attracting attention, made the litter-bearers force their way into the very midst of the gathering, causing, as they did so, no little distraction among the eager listeners, many of whom cast looks of displeasure at her. Others, caught by the splendor of her beauty, became less attentive to the discourse.

The Galilean teacher continued his sermon, taking no notice of the litter and its occupant, now stationed not more than fifty feet in front of him. Mary listened to his words with indifference. She had little relish, in her present state of mind, for the subject of the discourse, but presently her attention became arrested. She paid more attention and then eagerly drank in every word. After all, she was finding more entertainment than she had expected. As the modulated, penetrating tones reached her ears, and as her mind grasped the meaning of the

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words she became enthralled by the ideas presented to her.

Presently the prophet made a pause in his discourse. Mary looked up suddenly to discover the reason, and hoping in her heart that he would not discontinue. At that moment she caught the eyes of Jesus. In them she plainly saw reproof, and yet the greatest love. A shock passed through her whole being. Her soul was awakened. A great wave of contrition, as it were, passed over her. She looked again into the face of the great prophet. She dreaded that in that expressive countenance she would read her condemnation. But no; all was love and pity and an invitation to repentance. No word was spoken to her. One look was enough to check her in her delirious, downward course. She was changed by that one look of pitying love.

"Back! back to Bethsaida," she cried to the litter-bearers, "haste! Let some one run ahead to have the horses ready. I go to Magdala even now."

She closed the curtains of her litter, and at once began to divest herself of her rich ornaments. When the commotion occasioned by her departure had ceased, Jesus continued his discourse until the evening.

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CHAPTER XVI

TURNING BACK

THE winter passed and the month Nisan approached with the laughter of brooks and the warbling of the mating birds. The almond trees were masses of pink perfumed petals. Apple blossoms in the orchards were burdening the trees as with tinted snow. Flowers, bright of hue, delicious of perfume, were everywhere in field and on the roadside. The plum trees were full of white blossoms. The earth was carpeted with softest green. There was the welcome breath of early summer, inviting one again to live out of doors.

It was a Sabbath afternoon. Lazarus and Martha had attended the synagogue service at Bethany. Since his meeting with the great prophet, the son of Siro had become more exact in all that pertained to the worship of God. An inner consciousness told him that this would be pleasing to the great one.

In keeping with this increased religious spirit, he had secured a new Mesusah, or house phylactery. It consisted of a small longitudinally-folded parchment containing texts of Scripture which had been transcribed by himself from Deuteronomy vi, 4-9 and xi, 13-21. This parchment was enclosed in a shining metal case and affixed to the door post of the house. Par-

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ents and heads of families in going in and out reverently touched the Mesusah, pronouncing at the same time a benediction. It was a sort of remembrance of the escape from Egypt's destroying angel. This house phylactery was held in the greatest veneration. The Kabbalah says, mystically, that if dirt or dust were kept within even a cubit of the Mesusah three hundred and sixty-five demons would come.

When attending the synagogue services Lazarus wore the ordinary or personal Tephillin or phylacteries on the left arm toward the heart, and on the forehead. These consisted of capsules or little leathern boxes, containing on parchment four texts of Scripture taken from Exodus xiii, 10, xiii, 11-16, Deuteronomy vi, 4-9, and xi, 13-36. The phylactery of the forehead contained four distinct parchments. It was fastened by four leather straps or thongs. The thongs of the arm phylactery were wound around seven times.

Although Lazarus believed in the prophet of Cana, yet at this time, he had not the faintest dream that this same Jesus would before many years abolish the Jewish worship. He therefore thought he was honoring him, whom he believed to be divine, by observing with the utmost exactitude all the Mosaic ritual, especially in so far as it pertained to personal service or observance. Coupled with this devotional feeling was the hope that God would inspire his sister to return. For this he prayed frequently and fervently. It was because of

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this reverential and intercessory spirit that he attended most regularly the really beautiful service of the synagogue at Bethany.

The teaching portion of this service consisted mainly of reading a portion of the Toreh, or *halachar* or law, and an address or sermon. The liturgical element was important and of great beauty. It consisted of prayer, and the pronouncing of the Aaronic blessing, found in Numbers vi, 24-26, by Levites who were priests and not mere rabbins.

Before the pronouncing of the *shema,* which was a species of creed, or belief, compounded of Deuteronomy vi, 4-9, xi, 13-24, and Numbers xv, 37-41, two benedictions were given which every male Jew was bound to repeat every day. These benedictions were very beautiful. The first was:

"Blessed be Thou, O Lord, King of the world, Who formest light and createst darkness, Who maketh peace and created everything; Who, in mercy, giveth light to the earth, and to those who dwell upon it, and in Thy goodness, day by day and every day renewest the works of creation. Blessed be the Lord for the glory of His handiwork, and for the light-giving lights which He hath made for His praise. Selah. Blessed be the Lord our God Who formed the lights."

The second benediction appears equally beautiful and full of piety and unction:

"With great love hast Thou loved us, O Lord our God, and with much overflowing pity

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hast Thou pitied us, our Father and our King. For the sake of our fathers, who trusted in Thee, and Thou taughtest them the statutes of life, have mercy on us and teach us. Enlighten our eyes in Thy law; cause our hearts to cleave to Thy commandments; unite our hearts to love and fear Thy name, and we shall not be put to shame, world without end. For Thou art a God Who preparest salvation, and us hast Thou chosen from among all nations and tongues, and hast in truth brought us near to Thy great name—Selah—that we may lovingly praise Thee and Thy great oneness. Blessed be the Lord, Who in love chose His people Israel."

Then followed the *shema,* or creed. The benediction at the close of the service gives a glimpse of the infinite superiority of the Jewish religion over the numerous cults with which the people of Israel were surrounded. As the poetry of a nation is the crystallization of its sentiment and aspirations, so the public prayers show the religious view of a people's life. The closing benediction of the synagogue service carries with it a note of triumphant gladness. For the thinker it may, perhaps, partially explain the tenacity of the Jew for his religious opinions. There must have been some sort of exultation in the breast of every Jew as he listened to these words:

"True it is that Thou art Javah our God, and the God of our fathers, and our King, and the King of our fathers, our Creator, and the rock of our salvation, our help, and our deliverer.

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Thy name is from everlasting, and there is no God beside Thee. A new song did they that were delivered sing by the seashore. Together did all praise and own Thee King and say: Javah shall reign world without end. Blessed be the Lord God Who saveth Israel."

As Lazarus and Martha slowly wended their way homeward from the synagogue, he repeated some of the words of one of the benedictions:

"Enlighten our eyes in Thy law; cause our hearts to cleave to Thy commandments; unite our hearts to love and fear Thy name, and we shall not be put to shame."

"Would that our sister had followed in the spirit of this our prayer," he said mournfully.

"Grieve thou not immoderately," replied Martha, "thou knowest that Mary loveth us still. She will yet return to us."

"Dost thou think so, comforter?"

"Aye for a truth, and the great prophet, who cometh ere long to our house as his messenger saith, will forgive her if he be divine as thou sayest he is."

"I shall take shame to have her here when the Holy One comes," said Lazarus.

"Nay, thou art wrong," replied Martha. "Assuredly if he be God, as thou hast so often said, will he not have mercy? Would that she were here! Thy last messenger to her——"

"Was received more graciously than the former ones. Zamlech undertook the last journey to Magdala. He tells me there are now un-

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mistakable signs of sorrow on Mary's face. There are no more visitors there, and Amarias says there is no more wanton waste, for the nightly banquets have ceased."

"May the God of our fathers, and this great prophet—in whom I more than half believe—bring her home," said Martha.

"Amen, amen! O sister, thou dost rejoice my heart! When thou seest him thou wilt surely believe. I have no fear for thee, dear Martha. Thou hast but once to see his kingly mien, and look into those wondrous eyes!"

"I trust it may be as thou sayest," said Martha, wistfully, for she, too, was conscious that there was something in her heart and in her religious nature which was as yet unsatisfied.

It was one of those dreamy Oriental summer evenings which almost compel one to remain out of doors. Brother and sister were both under its influence. They passed through the house and lingered in the impluvium enjoying the luxury of the soft atmosphere laden with the odor of the early roses arranged in boxes around the fountain.

They ordered the evening meal to be spread in the court where there was a view of the garden and of the low hills beyond. They remained a long time at the meal in intense enjoyment of the soft gloaming. The crescent moon shed a soft luster around, making distant objects partly visible. The whitened walls

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of Siro's tomb were the most conspicuous objects in the evening scene.

Lazarus, thinking of nothing in particular, was gazing in the direction of this sepulcher when he observed a figure pass in front of the whitened rocks. Thinking it was some member of his household on a belated duty of gathering herbs for to-morrow's meal, or that the distant garden door having been left open, some of the poor of Bethany—they were never molested on such occasions—had come to help themselves, Lazarus paid no more attention to the apparition.

Martha had also seen the figure. She waited for her brother to make some remark. Finding that he did not do so, she at length said:

"Didst thou not see some one in the garden?"

"Some poor person of the village, I suspect. Molest her not, my Martha. She is welcome of our abundance."

While they were speaking the figure slowly approached them, and finally entered the impluvium. Who the stranger was the two could not distinguish. A long traveling cloth covered her figure, leaving nothing of the face visible save the eyes, and a part of the forehead on which glistened the customary discs of gold.

Lazarus arose. He was somewhat annoyed. It was a most unusual thing for an unknown person to intrude upon domestic privacy, even though easy access could be gained. The disguised figure came closer. Whoever she was,

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Lazarus saw that she was trembling and laboring under the stress of strong emotion.

"Can it be—" began the son of Siro, but with a sickening dread of disappointment, he left the sentence unfinished.

"Lazarus, my brother. Dare I hope to be received?"

"Mary! Mary! Oh! my beloved!" screamed Martha, running and hastily enfolding her sister in her arms, covering her hands and brow with kisses, and laughing and sobbing for joy at the same time.

Lazarus was speechless, overmastered by his emotions.

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CHAPTER XVII

THE MEETING

HAPPINESS now took possession of the household at Bethany. Mary knew that her brother and her sister had forgiven her. It was in keeping with the gentle kindness of Lazarus' character to ask no questions, nor did he probe the wounds which he knew must be festering in Mary's soul. He had learned enough from Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus of his sister's later wrong-doings to bring the blush of shame to his cheeks. Nicodemus especially had expatiated volubly upon her misdeeds. He was naturally garrulous, fond of rolling under his tongue morsels of gossip, and of giving them out with that gusto which talkative though not evil-intentioned persons so often exhibit.

Joseph was more reserved, but none the less severe in his denunciations. He appeared to be more grieved for the stain brought upon the name of his old friend Siro, than for the grief of Lazarus and Martha, or the disgrace to Mary herself. All the unpleasant speeches of these two friends of the family were softened, and the sting which often accompanied the denunciations was deadened by the happy fact of Mary's safe return, and by her present docility to every wish of either Lazarus or Martha.

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In the secrecy of her own room, Mary's rage against Decius, who she learned had returned to Rome, was intense. Every nerve and fiber of her being rose up in protest against his faithless love. She was only once more experiencing what thousands of women have suffered, and will continue to suffer till the end of time, namely, the disastrous but irrevocable effects of ill-considered and misplaced affection. She had loved the Roman ardently, and with so strong an attachment as to face ostracism from her people. She had given her life into his keeping only to learn that the voluptuary was unworthy of so great a treasure, and these considerations were the cause of her present delirium. For weeks after her return her sensitive, throbbing heart was sore with the knowledge of the shipwreck that had been made of its affections.

Simple and protected as had been her former life, she knew little about the wickedness of the world around her. She was unprepared, therefore, when she left the sheltering care of home to become the wife of not only an alien in faith, but even of a pagan—ill prepared, indeed, to see and battle with those circumstances which became her experience in those memorable months. Bereft, by her own act, of the guidance she had always received at home, she became her own inexperienced mistress. During the first few weeks she was the worshiped queen of the military officer, who lavished upon her a real, although, as it proved, a transitory affec-

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tion. He soon tired of her, and then the eyes of the wanderer from home were opened, for love, with him, did not even become mere fondness, but rapidly turned to weariness.

When Decius finally left her, the fact dawned on Mary that she would not be received again at Bethany. Unfortunately, not being dependent upon her brother for subsistence, she adopted a course which well nigh broke his heart, and which, now that she was again safely housed at home, sent the blood mantling to her own brow at its mere remembrance.

She was grateful to Lazarus and her sister for their kindly reception of her. On her way hither, after her strong resolve to leave the past with all its horrors, she dreaded most what she anticipated would be the stern and angry questions to which Lazarus would demand replies. Instead of all this, she found only gentle consideration from him, and a more than sisterly affection from the erstwhile estranged Martha.

Mary, before her departure, had heard nothing from Lazarus concerning the wonderful prophet, for, it will be remembered, he returned from that eventful visit to Cana on the very night she left Bethany. Often she had heard her brother dilate on the youth of Nazareth whom he had seen crowned as king of the roses. In the happier days the three had often discussed the wonderful child, and had expressed the hope that he would prove to be the Messias.

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It was not until after her return that she heard from her brother, who was never tired of repeating his experiences, and of recounting the story of the turning the water into wine, that the wonder-worker had been identified with the youth of Nazareth, yet she told neither brother nor sister of that wonderful look of love which this same prophet had given her in the meadow by the Lake of Genesareth.

Her brother's experience and her own knowledge thrilled her. Oh! if this one should prove to be the Chosen One of God would he not lift her up from the low condition into which she had fallen! She hoped and longed, she scarcely knew for what. Her cup of pleasure had turned to bitterness. Would not this one who already had read her inmost soul grant her solace when he should come?

Her God, she believed, was now frowning upon her with inexorable severity. She dared not raise her eyes to him for pardon or for pity. Was he not an angry God, ready to chastise and to smite! Yet, if this Jesus, in whom her brother believed so unfalteringly, were to come and prove himself to be divine, could she not then hope for restoration and forgiveness and peace! Had he not done much for her already? One compassionate look of love had stopped her in her course of folly. At present her unhappy heart was a void. She knew herself to be capable of strong affection and love toward one who could satisfy her soul and calm the unrest of her mind. Her whole

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nature called loudly for some one to love—for some one on whom she could pour out the wealth of her ardent affection.

"Who knows," she said to herself again and again, "but that this great one can satisfy the desire of my soul? Is not all Judea and Samaria at this moment ringing with the praises of his works? Have not I, even I, seen his power over myself? Surely he must be God to do these things. Do not the reports say that all his miracles are wrought to alleviate distress and misery, and to drive away pain and sorrow?"

She remembered that only a day or two before, two men whom she had fed while at Magdala, blind, itinerant beggars, had passed through Bethany, singing and praising God and this great prophet for their restored sight. They were then on their way to make a thanksgiving offering in the Temple. Would not he whose heart was touched by every human infirmity see her misery and remove the sorrow that now clouded her life? If he were so compassionate over the miseries of the body, would he not be solicitous for those of the soul! Oh! what might she not hope from him if she could again come across his path!

It was with unfeigned, although unmanifested delight that she learned from Lazarus that the great worker of miracles had set his face toward Jerusalem, and that in a few days he and some of his followers would come to Bethany. A messenger had informed Lazarus

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that Jesus would come according to the promise he had made, and would rest in the house of him whom he had called friend.

From the moment Lazarus received the message until the arrival of the guest, three days later, he was in a state of exultant expectation. The coming visit filled his waking thoughts and occupied his dreams. During the day he counted the hours that must elapse until the time of the coming. Garden and forest and stream and sea were laid under contribution to furnish the table. As the time approached the house was cleaned and garnished with fresh green boughs. The pillars of the peristyle were twined about with creeping greenery. Many extra lamps were hung around the court, and boxes of flowering shrubs encircling the impluvium were renewed by others of fresher bloom or richer fragrance.

Lazarus invited several guests to grace the occasion. Joseph of Arimathea had promised to be present. Nicodemus, talkative and skeptical, had given his word that he would be there, although he said he had many questions to ask the prophet which he did not think he would be able to answer. Martha, on whom all the domestic arrangements devolved, had invited Miriam, the daughter of Zadiel Ben Israel, to assist her. The brother neglected the business of his bazaar. Was not a more important event than the mere making of money about to take place! Zamlech, the son of the Arab sheik, was to remain at the bazaar,

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and Lazarus trusted this Bedouin. Pathira begged so earnestly for permission to be at Bethany when the great one came that Lazarus had not the heart to refuse him.

As the house began to fill with guests, many times Mary winced at the scorn or coldness shown her. Did she go into Jerusalem for the purpose of making purchases for the coming of the miracle worker, she was met by former acquaintances with the cold stare of social ostracism, or by a shrug of the shoulders and a holding of the skirts. There was one exception to all this unkindness, in Miriam. Mary and the daughter of Zadiel had known each other almost since infancy.

Mary's offense in the eyes of the world as represented by the people of Jerusalem had not been so much the transgression of the moral law—the world has never been a severe judge in this—as an offense against public propriety. The world never forgives this. Mary's position was therefore a difficult one, and had it not been for the good offices of the sensible Miriam, and her sister's love and encouragement, it would have been an intolerable one, for as the time of the visit drew near the feeling against her appeared to increase.

At last the sun of the third day had nearly touched the horizon. Jesus was expected to arrive before it had set. The master had set watches at intervals along the road leading to Jericho to give notice of the prophet's approach. The family and the guests were all in

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their rooms quietly awaiting the signal that should herald the coming of the great one. Suddenly Lazarus heard the first cry far away along the road. It was taken up by one after another of the servants until the guests heard the shouting in front of the castle:

"He comes! he comes! the great teacher approaches!"

Lazarus and Martha, Miriam with Mary, who was trembling from nervous excitement and ill-defined hopes, Joseph and Nicodemus, went to the front entrance of the castle to give formal welcome to the visitor. The group placed themselves on a stone platform a step or two higher than the path which led from the road. With Jesus were between a dozen and twenty men. When still on the public road a little distance from the castle he turned and sent the majority of them into Jerusalem, retaining with him three who appeared to be closer to his person, and more particularly attached to him. These were James and John, natives of Bethsaida, and a somewhat rugged looking man with an earnest face and impulsive manner. This one was Peter, who next to their master seemed to hold a position of superiority.

Jesus, slightly in advance of the little group of travelers, walked slowly from the road to the house, those on the platform intently watching his progress. The approach of the great thaumaturgus, whose fame now filled all the land, variously affected the little band who

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were awaiting him. Joseph of Arimathea was visibly nervous, as shown by the movement of his lips and the shaking of his long beard. Nicodemus for once lost his volubility—for once his memory failed him so that he could not recall a suitable quotation from the Mishna. An unconscious twitching of the eyelids told that he was under the effect of a strong emotion.

The face of Lazarus flamed with joyful excitement and loving veneration. Martha, scarcely less influenced, had been furtively watching her brother. At length, unable to restrain her own emotion any longer, with tears running down her face she said:

"Oh! he must be divine! I believe! I believe! my brother," at which a glad light sprang into Lazarus' eyes.

Miriam eagerly watched the approach of the great teacher. She, too, had hopes. What did she expect? Suddenly her eyes brightened also. She had, with the divination of love, recognized in Jesus her father's guest who had so wisely disputed with the doctors many years before, and who had given her that remarkable promise. Lazarus at Cana had failed at first to recognize in the prophet the youth of Nazareth. Miriam, with a woman's truer intuition, had known her father's guest at once. Her heart beat rapidly, and in order to still its tumult she clasped her hands across her breast.

One had shrunk back to the rear of the little group. Mary was leaning against the doorpost

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for support. Her hands were clasped and held down at arms length, as if in humble, pathetic appeal. Her beautiful hair, escaped from her turban, covered her shoulders in its luxuriance. There was now no paint upon her face, nor antimony on her brows or sweeping lashes, nor golden coins ornamenting her brow, yet never was she more beautiful than now in her longing and in her sorrow. The marks of her soul's tragedy were indelible on her face, yet the pathos of grief did not destroy her loveliness.

As the guest slowly approached, they saw a man slightly taller than most men. Although he was now oppressed by weariness from long travel, so that his shoulders drooped a little, there was about him an air of wonderful dignity mingled with an ever abiding calmness. His outer garment was of wool, light in texture and of a shade between gray and brown. It was dust-stained from many journeys. The sandals were old and much worn. They were fastened by strong leather thongs to the feet, which were red and swollen as from much travel.

Although the garb was that of the ordinary poor people of Galilee, and was even austere, there was an air in the person which told of lordly command mingled with the sweetest condescension. The head was uncovered and well poised upon a slender neck which was bare. Full brown locks, parted in the middle, fell to the shoulders. The forked beard was of a

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color so light as to approach redness. The brow, notwithstanding that it was always exposed to the sun and wind, was of the whiteness of alabaster.

At the present moment, at the end of a long journey on foot, the eyes had a weary look, yet they possessed a wonderfully penetrating power, and when they looked on one in kindness they spoke of deepest love. At their glance the soul surrendered and became a willing captive. Benevolence and firmness were stamped on his countenance; his glance, being full of innocence and sweetness, was accompanied by an air of the utmost dignity and wisdom. There was a sadness in the eyes that would make one weep, yet which gave birth to love inexhaustible. Mary looked into them and was fain to see forgiveness also.

A sweet, gentle smile spread over the countenance of Jesus as he approached the waiting company at the entrance. He said:

"Peace be to this house."

Lazarus, almost swooning with the intensity of his emotions, knelt on the doorstep to receive his guest. He reverently took the hand of Jesus, saying as he pressed it to his lips:

"My Lord and my God! Welcome, Master! welcome under my roof."

He was gently raised to his feet by Jesus, who then smiled upon all present. Without delay Lazarus led the four guests into the atrium and water was brought. Pathira claimed the privilege of attending to the ablu-

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tions of the great teacher. When these were performed and sweet smelling ointments offered, the master of the house at once led the way to the tables.

The presence of Jesus had a powerful effect on all, even the skeptical Pharisee, Nicodemus, coming under its influence. All present were moved by a great personal love for Jesus, and for one another, thus making the supper a veritable agape. Their hearts burned at his words as the feast progressed. The family and the invited guests hung upon his lips when he spoke, and waited in reverent attitudes for answers to their many and varied inquiries about his ministry and his miracles.

During the repast the conversation was cheerful and at times even animated. Once or twice the Arimathean and Peter engaged in a somewhat trenchant dispute as to the nature of the great teacher's real mission. Peter was very impulsive. His speech betrayed this almost as soon as he entered into conversation. John and James had, more than once, occasion to smile at the gentle reprimand the other disciple received from his master for some over-zealous or extravagant statement. These personal followers of Christ had often witnessed such occurrences, and although they gave Peter a large share of deference, according to the wish of their common master, yet they did not forego some innocent raillery at his expense when he received correction. From his looks and whole manner, no one could en-

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tertain a doubt that Peter's whole heart and love were given to the wonder worker.

When the repast was ended the guests retired to the roof of the house. Lazarus was anxious to learn how Jesus would regard Mary. He had watched his sister closely during the repast. Seeing her uneasiness, he had resolved to tell Jesus her pitiful story; yet he argued with himself that as the prophet was divine he must know all things and the relation of the facts would therefore be unnecessary.

Once he had seen Jesus cast a marvelous look upon Mary, who was sitting at a table some distance from him. Lazarus saw that she caught the glance, blushed deeply and dropped her eyes to the dish before her. He noted that she trembled from head to foot beneath that gaze.

Mary had not expiated her fault in the eyes of the Jews. Even her brother's guests treated her coldly, or with neglect. The kind-hearted Miriam was the only one who talked at all with her during the meal. For the greater part of the time she spent at the table she was silent and unnoticed.

When the guests arose to ascend to the roof she remained behind. Her brother preceded the company, leaving Martha to attend those who followed. He had taken the three disciples with him, leaving the better acquainted guests to come next, expecting that Martha would wait upon and accompany Jesus. She had,

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however, gone with Joseph and Nicodemus, not understanding her brother's design.

Jesus was left alone in the open court with Mary.

The numerous lamps on and around the banquet tables were still burning brightly. Mary looked up from the revery into which she had fallen, and saw that she and Jesus were alone. Timidly, wistfully she looked at the great teacher.

"Mary!"

The sound of the penetrating, yet melodious voice sent her blood coursing through her veins. It showed sympathy, power, mercy, love in its tones. As one in a trance, scarcely realizing what she was doing, or where she was going, yet impelled by an influence she could not resist, she arose from the table. She cast one longing, hungering look into that face, her pleading eyes calling for mercy and forgiveness, asking, as only human eyes can ask, not to be condemned, not to be left to herself, not to be cast adrift again on the perilous voyage on life's ocean. At that moment she saw all the horror of her sin, loathing it with an intensity that was overwhelming. Jesus did not speak as she came nearer to him. He looked on her with eyes of gentle compassion and mercy. Mary saw only the glance of those eyes and yet she knew the lips were parted to grant a sweet and condescending pardon.

Her heart, sore and buffeted, beat with love and repentance. She believed in this one be-

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fore her. She knew now in her inmost soul that he was God. She fell prostrate before him, speaking no word. He will know and understand all her story.

There on the ground she wept healing tears of contrition, her sobs shaking her frame. And as her tears flowed in relieving streams, her heart was changed. A sweet and gentle peace stole softly into it. She knew he had not repulsed her, and oh! the joy of that knowledge! The bruised reed had not been broken. He knew and yet he forgave! That was enough for her. Henceforth her life shall be one long immolation. Her sorrow shall blot out the past. Lying on the ground before him she awaited that word which shall give forever peace to her storm-tossed soul. At last, in him she has found one on whom she could pour out all the abundant wealth of her affectionate nature—a nature now purified by contrition, and to be strengthened by heroic resolve.

"Mary!"

"Speak, my Lord and Master."

"Thy sins are forgiven thee, because thou lovest much."

She felt the effect of the divine words. It was as if a great, heavy load, which had for so long been bearing her down to earth, had been lifted and borne away. Joy, serene and ineffable, filled her soul. Amid a rain of happy tears, she arose to her knees and seized the hand of her Lord, bedewing it with the evidences of love's gratitude. All her doubts and

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fears were gone. Peace, calm and holy, reigned in her soul. Its effect showed itself upon her now beaming countenance, although her lashes were still wet with her tears.

At the moment of Mary's rapturous exultation, while she yet clung to the hand of him who had pardoned her, her brother hastily returned to the court. He had perceived that the principal guest was not upon the roof, and was fearful lest there should appear a lack of courteousness. He saw at a glance the transformation which had been wrought in his sister. Speechless with astonishment and gratitude, he stood with outstretched hands. At length regaining the power of speech, he said:

"Lord, thou knowest all?"

"Yea, and her love hath wrought her pardon."

Jesus and Lazarus advanced toward the stairway, the latter slightly in advance, and leading the way. When they had ascended one or two steps, Jesus turned and, pointing to Mary, said to Lazarus:

"Cherish thy sister, friend, for she loveth me much."

Mary stood as one in an ecstasy. A flood of love and light inundated her soul. Her face was slightly raised. Her fingers were interlocked and held beneath her chin. Her arms were raised. The light of the moon shone upon her beautiful features, its rays making diamonds of the remaining happy tears yet

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upon her lashes, and glinting in her loosely flowing hair.

She stood there, her heart almost bursting with new emotions, the great penitent of love for all future ages, on the threshold of a career that has been the wonder of mankind.

The people of Bethany were kindly disposed toward the great prophet. Simon the leper, a neighbor of Lazarus, also invited Christ to a supper at his own house. Lazarus and the three apostles went with their master. No one but her brother as yet knew of Mary's forgiveness, and all the rest of the guests in the house of Lazarus continued to treat her with coldness and to keep aloof from her.

Joy now filled her heart and the peace of heaven was within her soul. She cared no longer for cold looks or the sneers of others. Her one anxiety now was to do some honor to the divine prophet who had dealt so mercifully with her.

During the progress of the banquet in Simon's house she quietly entered the dining hall and stood behind the couch where Christ was reclining. Her soul was filled with emotions and her tears rained copiously upon the feet of him who had the night before looked upon her with so much love and forgiveness. As yet she was known as the public sinner, and she knew that her presence would be regarded as an intrusion by Simon. Her gratitude toward the prophet made her bold. She was willing to suffer humiliation from Simon, who

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she knew would object to her presence when he should discover her.

The delicious odor of the perfume with which she anointed the head of Christ, as it permeated the atmosphere of the room, attracted to her the attention of the guests. She gave a sigh of satisfaction when she understood that her action was pleasing to the great prophet. She scarcely heard the murmurs of some, or the promise of her own immortal fame. Her whole being, life, thought, desire and undying love were given to the great one before her. She knelt once more at the feet of the great Pardoner as he pronounced her public absolution: "Thy sins are forgiven thee," and as she arose, restored and rehabilitated among her kinsmen and neighbors, her heart was filled with such gratitude and love that it was nigh unto bursting. Quietly she picked up the fragments of the broken alabaster vase and put the pieces in her veil and retired, unmindful of looks of indignation or the murmurs of disapproval of the guests. Her love had made her bold. This love was to be sorely wounded in the days to come.

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CHAPTER XVIII

LAZARUS

CHRIST remained for several days at the home of him whom he called his friend. During this happy period the family learned many things concerning the nature of the kingdom the Messias was about to establish.

During the quiet evening talks, on the roof, or when sitting around the fountain, it was unfolded to Lazarus that this kingdom was not to be one of earthly supremacy, but of the soul. A new doctrine of love was to be given to the world.

Mary daily drank in great draughts of this love. She was never willingly absent from the presence of Jesus, but hungrily listened to the words that fell from his lips. A sort of holy familiarity between the members of the household and their divine guest was established.

Christ had read the hearts of all. He had seen in Lazarus the beautiful simplicity of a manly character, and he loved him greatly. This love had been ardently reciprocated by Lazarus, to whom a new world had been revealed in the last few days. He had caught a portion of that spirit of love and self-sacrifice which the great teacher infused into his followers. Once more ere the visit ended he repeated the request, which he had first made at

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Cana, to be allowed to attach himself to the person of Christ and follow him in his career. And once again he was denied, in words that were a mystery to him:

"Thou canst not come with me now, O Lazarus, but through thee shall God be greatly glorified."

Governed by a will stronger than his own, Lazarus submitted and asked no more. Many times in the months that followed did he ponder over this mysterious saying, little dreaming of the wonderful and unique knowledge he should one day possess.

Acting upon what he regarded as the will of him whom he believed to be divine, he contentedly remained at home, attending to his household affairs and to the business of the bazaar. Many of his acquaintances in Jerusalem knew that he had received Jesus as his guest at Bethany. He was frequently asked the details of the visit, and whether any miracles had been performed. He rarely replied to such questions.

The son of Siro regarded the conversion of Mary as a great miracle, but he made no mention of this to his friends. Thus it happened that the public knew nothing of her change of heart. She was not solicitous that it should be known. It was enough for her to have the joy of her forgiveness. She now cared naught for what others might say.

The bazaar owner treasured every item of information he could gather concerning the

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great teacher from the numerous traders who came to the mart. Scarcely ever had there been so great an excitement in Jerusalem as when the raising to life of the young man of Naim was reported. The giving back life to the daughter of Jairus also caused the greatest wonderment. The name of Jesus was on every tongue. Some doubted the truth of the reports—they were too wonderful. More than one of the priests attributed the results to magic. In all Judea, and especially in Jerusalem, opinion became much divided. Mary and Martha and their brother were jubilant.

By the middle of the second year of the great teacher's ministry Lazarus could not but view with alarm the growing hostility toward Jesus, as manifested by certain influential Jews, and especially by the Pharisees and some of the priests belonging to the Temple. The ingenuous mind of Lazarus could not understand why these people should wish to antagonize one who was constantly going about doing nothing but good. Whatever their motives might be, he could not but recognize that the prophet was in danger. In proportion to his love and reverence, this made him anxious and worried. It destroyed his sleep and impaired his appetite.

Dwelling almost entirely at Bethany in these days and leaving the affairs of the bazaar in trustworthy hands, Lazarus devoted much time to his favorite occupation of transcribing with the most minute exactness copies of the law for the poorer synagogues. This was tiring work

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and a great drain on the strength of the voluntary scribe.

On the feast of the Dedication, in December in the second year of Christ's ministry, Lazarus accompanied him to the Temple. While there the son of Siro was not a little puzzled, and quite excited to hear the prophet speak of his own death. He told those who thronged about him that he would, as a shepherd, lay down his life for his sheep. In order that there might be no misunderstanding he said again:

"No man taketh it away from me; but I lay it down of myself and I have power to lay it down and power to take it up again."

A discussion arose among those who had heard these words and a rabbin came to him and said:

"How long dost thou hold our souls in suspense: if thou be the Christ tell us plainly."

It appeared to Lazarus, and to the apostles also, that this was a crucial moment. The former thought that now the miracle worker would certainly declare his mission, and in virtue of that power by which he had already wrought such wonders would bend all hearts and minds to receive him as the Messias, and that at once he would assume temporal as well as spiritual authority.

With tense nerve and straining ear, the excited Lazarus listened to Christ making response. During the wonderful speech of the declaration of his divinity, the noise, at first only a small murmur of dissent, increased in

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volume. Lazarus lost much of the discourse. Once he caught the words:

"And I give them life everlasting."

The angry hubbub increasing, he lost many sentences that followed, but pushing his way closer to the speaker he heard the last words:

"I and the Father are one."

At this declaration the anger of the Jews seemed to pass all bounds. They surged around him and would have torn him to pieces. Many took up stones to hurl at him, but appeared afraid to throw them for fear of wounding their own friends.

"Flee! master, flee!" cried Lazarus, in intense excitement, "see! these senseless people seek to kill thee. I and thy followers will delay them while thou escapest!"

The angry Jews crowded around the small company of believers with the intention of seizing the object of their hatred. The confusion lasted several minutes; when it had partially subsided Jesus could nowhere be seen. He had escaped from the angry mob.

As Lazarus walked alone to Bethany that evening he was sad, and sorely puzzled. He would, while there was danger, have protected Christ at the peril of his life. Now he had gone, no one knew whither. Was this to be the end of all those sublime teachings? Was failure and final obscurity to be the result of a series of astounding miracles!

Puzzled as he was, he did not lose faith. There were in his mind a score of questions he

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could not answer. It was all a deep, dark mystery. He could not see promise of even future triumph in present failure, yet he would not be disloyal. He would be content to wait for explanations, for surely Christ must have his own designs in permitting all this.

He was overjoyed upon approaching his castle, to see Mary running to him, declaring that the great teacher had gone by the house on his way to the Desert of Peraea. He had given her a look of recognition as he passed, and she had learned from one of his followers that the desert was his destination for the present.

Early the next morning Lazarus ordered two mules to be laden with food and wine and warm coverings, for it was now December and the nights were cold, and dispatched these provisions by two trusty servants to the prophet, with a loving message that more would be sent if he decided to remain in seclusion. The bazaar merchant would have accompanied the servants had he not felt too unwell. Anxiety for the safety of his friend had told severely on him. His sisters noted with alarm, as time went on, that he was daily growing weaker. He was compelled to remain in the house and rest the greater part of each day. He, as well as his sisters, thought that the winter weather was the cause of his ailment, and that as the spring months of Shebat and Adar approached he would grow stronger. Tebeth, Shebat, and half of Adar, or March, passed without im-

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provement and Martha became greatly alarmed. The best medical skill of the time was resorted to, and even the Roman physicians who attended Pilate's court came out to Bethany. By the middle of the month of Adar a high fever had developed.

The distress of Mary and Martha was pitiful. Then only, when they realized the danger of losing him, did they completely comprehend how dear their brother was to them. One evening, as the two sisters were sitting sorrowfully and helplessly by the bedside, the thought came to Mary to send a message to their great friend, who was still sojourning in Peraea.

"He will surely come, because he loveth our brother," said Mary, hopefully.

"Yes, my sister," replied Martha, "he who hath by his word cured so many sick, and even raised the dead to life, will not tarry when he knoweth that our brother lieth sick."

That night Pathira was sent to Christ with the simple message:

"He whom thou lovest is sick."

The sublime trust and faith in their friend forbade the sisters to send aught but these simple words, being sure that they would instantly draw the healer to the bedside of him whom he loved.

Pathira returned the next morning. He was eagerly questioned how Christ had received the message. Mary and Martha were amazed when the Egyptian told them that the great teacher did not appear moved by it, nor make

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as though he would comply with the implied request. Their disappointment was heavy, and was rendered heavier when they saw that their brother was sinking rapidly. They knew that if aid were not rendered within a few hours, it would come too late.

As the hours crept slowly by, and no Jesus came, nor message from him, their hearts sank low. It was a severe test of their faith and loyalty. Oh! if he would but come! When, at the first yellow streaks of early dawn on the following day, Lazarus, their brother and protector, lay back and expired, they gave way to grief inconsolable. All that day, until late in the afternoon, when the body was laid beside those of Siro and Eucharia, the two sisters were plunged into an excess of sorrow.

"Oh! if the Lord had come! if the Lord had come!" they wept and moaned incessantly, "but now—too late!—too late! Our brother is gone forever!"

Again and again was Pathira questioned regarding the mode of his reception. Could it be regarded as a refusal to come? Did the messenger make the message clear? Was there no implied promise to accede to their wishes? They derived small consolation from Pathira's oft-repeated story.

Three days passed and the sisters received no word from their friend. The many friends present had no need to create an artificial atmosphere of mourning. The sorrow of all was real enough. Some of Mary's old nature was

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seen in her demonstrative grief. Floods of impassioned tears would burst from her eyes at every remembrance of kind act or word from her brother. Martha received a measure of consolation from her many friends who came from Jerusalem to comfort her, but Mary remained inconsolable.

In the early morning hours of the fifth day, one of the servants came in haste to Martha to tell her that Jesus was approaching. She at once went out to meet him. She was sadly disfigured. Her eyes were red and swollen with weeping. Her garments were rent and she had sprinkled dust upon her head. Grief had transformed the placid, careful manager of the household into a personification of woe.

Jesus looked upon her with compassion, waiting to hear whether she would complain of his long delay. Her complaint was affectionate, yet real and natural.

"Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died."

The freedom of reverential friendship spoke, but she immediately added:

"And now also I know that whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."

A satisfied expression came over the countenance of Christ, and then after a few words he asked Martha the question which, notwithstanding her grief and her disappointment, drew from her that magnificent act of faith:

"Yea, Lord, I have believed that thou art

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the Christ, the Son of the living God, who art come into the world."

Martha went and whispered to Mary, who was still weeping in the house. The Lord, when she came, had no need to test her faith. She fell at his feet and used the same words her sister had done. Her grief was intense. Her tears were flowing freely, and many of her friends who came out with her wept in sympathy, as she waited in loving patience.

Among all of those with whom Christ had come in contact in the course of his ministry, he loved none more than this family. His human sympathy for their loss was now aroused, and he wept with them, nor did any of those who were standing around the sorrowful group think it in any wise remarkable that he should do so.

A few moments later the scene was turned from one of sorrow to one of the profoundest awe. When Jesus had given a few directions for the removal of the grave stone, he assumed a majesty which his nearest and closest friends had never before seen him exhibit. His figure seemed to grow taller by reason of the omnipotent power within him which he was about to exercise. An awed silence fell upon the little gathering as they watched him. No one knew what would take place, but many were in expectation of some portentous event. They saw him raise to heaven his face, on which was shining ineffable glory, such as some of the apostles had once seen on Mount Tabor. They

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heard him pray to his Father. They gave but small attention to the words he uttered, so intent were they watching the commanding majesty of the Lord of life and death.

With a loud and commanding voice, as if intended to reach the very confines of the other world, Jesus called back the soul to the body of Lazarus.

"Lazarus, come forth."

The friend of Jesus instantly emerged from the tomb, his face white and bandaged around with the grave clothes, alive and well. He had been beyond the grave, and returned! In his eyes was a light which showed a knowledge of that which lies beyond this life. What wondrous tales could not Lazarus now relate, did he but choose to speak!

Martha was almost swooning from the intensity of her emotions. She and Mary stood for a moment dazed at the awfulness of the tremendous scene enacted before them. Mary was the first to recover. Love for their resuscitated brother took possession of the faculties of both. With almost a scream of joy Mary ran to Lazarus, and tore the bandages from his head and mouth. A moment later, suddenly, as if she had forgotten an imperative duty, she turned to Jesus to pour out her heart's ecstatic thanksgiving. He was not there! Immediately after the miracle he had withdrawn. Looking away in the distance they saw that he was again on the road leading to the Desert of Peraea. He had performed the miracle out-

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side of the town, as the garden of Lazarus was on the confines of Bethany.

Lazarus was so well known in Jerusalem, and the miracle was witnessed by so many people that it could not be denied by the enemies of Christ. It was the proximate occasion that led the priests and other enemies of the great teacher to seek and plan the death of the Messias.

Events followed rapidly after this stupendous miracle. A few days later Jesus came again as a guest to Bethany, bringing with him this time his chosen apostles. The sisters, bankrupt in gratitude as they thought themselves, did their utmost to honor their great benefactor.

There was a great deal of intense feeling at this last supper at Bethany. Every one present was aware that the chief priests had decided upon Christ's death. He himself had also foretold it. All of those present felt that some time in the near future, he would be taken. Mary used every endeavor to make this supper, which she felt might be the last which the great teacher would take with them, one to be remembered. She thought of everything that might give pleasure to her great guest and his followers, and yet when all was done her great love appeared unsatisfied. She instinctively felt that to sit at his feet and listen to his teaching was the truest form of welcome.

Christ remained a few days, and on the last day of the visit the familiarity with which he

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was regarded by the friends at Bethany was shown by a complaint which came from the usually uncomplaining Martha. She was more desirous than ever on this last day of his sojourn in Bethany to hear the words that fell from his lips, and yet the exigencies of hospitality required her to be much away from the presence of the great teacher. As the last meal drew near and she was losing much of what was being said, she fretted, and momentarily lost patience. She turned to the master:

"Lord, hast thou no care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Speak to her, therefore, that she may help me."

Mary suddenly realized that perhaps she might be playing the selfish part. Blushing, she made as if to rise from her seat to render assistance to Martha. But Christ stopped her. Stretching forth his hand to Mary, as if to detain her, he turned and addressed the other sister in terms of gentle reproach.

"Martha, Martha, thou art fretful and troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the better part which shall not be taken away from her. Resume thy seat, daughter, and listen to the words of life."

Both sisters blushed; Martha on account of the mild rebuke she had received, and Mary with the pleasure of being allowed a little longer to sit at the feet of him whom she loved so dearly. Her love gave her more insight. She had realized more fully than Martha the

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divine guest in Jesus. She considered it of much more importance to be near him, and learn his spirit, than to shower upon him the services of hospitality. Eagerly desirous of paying him homage, she felt that Jesus would prefer the soul thirsting for the waters of life to the one who would fain overwhelm him even with the kindliest offices of hospitality.

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CHAPTER XIX

MELIUS, THE SON OF THE FREEDMAN

"I ASSURE you, Claudia, this governorship of Judea in these turbulent times is no sinecure," said Pontius Pilate to his wife one morning a few days later than the events recorded at the close of the last chapter.

The Lady Claudia Procula did not reply, and Pilate continued.

"These Jews are a strange people. A few days ago the whole city rang with shouts in honor of this prophet of theirs. His entry into Jerusalem was as much a triumph as any which our generals have ever received."

"Yes, the ovation to their prophet was a remarkable spectacle," replied Claudia. "I saw it from the fortress roof. The people appeared transported with joy and enthusiasm."

"They are a fickle people," said the other. "To-day these Jews are his bitterest enemies. Melius tells me there were strange doings among the priests last night. Outside the city walls this prophet was taken, and in the darkness they brought him to their Pontifex Maximus. I suppose that during the day there will be more unpleasant work for me to do."

His brow clouded at the thought of distasteful duties to come.

"Dear Pontius," said Claudia, "why not re-

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tire from this post of governor? Would not our days be happier and life pass more calmly were we back again at our peaceful villa on the Appian Way? What can this city have for us when compared to the delights of Rome?"

"But the revenues——"

"Are amply sufficient," interrupted Claudia, "if you will but stop the squandering of your sesterces in those games of chance. Surely our five hundred slaves are enough to cultivate our farms."

This remaining in Jerusalem was the only point of disagreement between Pilate and his wife. She longed to be back in Rome, away from the heat of the Syrian sun, and from a people from whom it was possible that harm might come. She lived in constant dread that some day the oppressed Jews would rush into the palace, and, in their fury, slaughter the household.

Nor was this fear altogether without foundation. For six years Pilate had held the office of procurator of Judea, under Vitellius, the President of Syria. Keenly anxious to keep in the good graces of Caesar Tiberius, yet it seemed to be his fate that he should ever be doing those things most calculated to stir up the wrath of the Jewish people. In the beginning of his reign, imitating the blunder of a former procurator, the Roman soldiers whom he brought with him carried into the Holy City on their standards the image of the emperor. The Jews petitioned for the removal of these

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images. Pilate gave a signal to his soldiers to surround the petitioners, and put them to death unless they ceased to trouble him. Upon the Jews declaring they were willing to die rather than permit idolatrous images to remain, he yielded and they were sent to Caesarea.

On another occasion he incensed the inhabitants by hanging on the walls of his palace shields on which were inscribed the names of the Roman gods. Such acts, and the appropriation of the Temple revenues used for the redemption of captives, had thoroughly exasperated the Jews, and, on more than one occasion the wholesale slaughter of the people at the time of the solemn festival, rendered Claudia Procula's uneasiness by no means unfounded.

Pilate walked up and down the peristyle thinking over the words of his wife. She lay in a half reclining position upon a long bench abundantly supplied with cushions. She had the languid air of one in weak health. The pallor of her face was heightened by the white costume of Greek fashion and classic simplicity —a style much affected by the Roman women of that period. Behind her stood a black-skinned Ethiopian girl, whose sable arms and face contrasted strongly with the whiteness of her lady's face and dress, and with the pillars of the peristyle.

The brass bands on her arms and wrists glittered as she constantly fanned the Lady Claudia with a large fan of peacock feathers. The lady seemed to enjoy the gentle breeze, perfumed as

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it was with the odor of roses which were blooming abundantly in the impluvium. In more immediate attendance on Claudia waited a fairer-skinned, dark-eyed maid from Galatia, whom Pilate had purchased for his wife before setting out to govern the distant land of Judea.

Pilate was superstitious and gave much time to the observing of omens and auguries. He also had a keen taste for the beautiful, although to-day little attention was given to the rich surroundings of his palace, or to the cool marble pillars of the peristyle, contrasting with the dark green laurel and oleander shrubs placed between them. He was, also, too worried to attend to the auspices.

Not long before there had been an uprising in the city, when the soldiers had with much difficulty quelled a disturbance in the Temple. On that occasion several people lost their lives. Owing to the excitement in the streets thus early in the morning he expected a recurrence of similar events to-day.

The slight dissension between Pilate and his wife was not prolonged, for just at that moment Melius, the son of Velinus the Freedman, came from the atrium to the peristyle with news of the early morning's doings.

Melius was a handsome youth of about seventeen, and quite a favorite with both Claudia and Pilate. He held a position in the household midway between what would be now called a page and an amanuensis, and far above the menial condition of a servant. Claudia re-

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garded him more in the light of an adopted son than merely as one of her retinue. Consequent on his position, he was free to come and go as he pleased. Early in the day as it was, he had already been in the streets of Jerusalem.

"What news outside, Melius?" asked the procurator.

"My lord, never have I seen so much excitement in the streets. The city is seething therewith. The houses seem empty; the bazaars are deserted, and thousands of excited Hebrews surround the house of Caiphas, the Jewish pontifex. They say that some great criminal has been taken. Many of the priests of the Temple are urging the people to demand of thee his death."

"It is their great prophet, Melius."

"Impossible, master! for only a day or two ago, as you remember, they stripped the trees hereabout to strew the way in his honor. It can not be! It must be some great criminal, but not their prophet."

"Nevertheless it is the prophet," replied Pilate. "These Jews dare not put a criminal to death. They will bring him to me. This is the second disturbance within a month! I thought I had satisfied these turbulent people when I condemned Bar Abbas, who was lately captured and is now awaiting execution."

A frown of deep concern gathered on the brow of the governor as he thought of the reports which would be sent to Caesar Tiberius concerning these frequent disturbances. His

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irresolute lips quivered in anticipation of a day's unpleasant tasks.

At that moment, a fearful sound broke in upon them. At first it resembled a distant murmur, but every second it grew louder and fiercer as it came nearer. Claudia became alarmed. For an instant the two men's faces paled. The sound was ominous. It was that of an angry multitude approaching. Above the dull, sullen roar of many moving feet on the paved streets, thousands of harsh cries rent the air. The three in the peristyle waited in breathless anxiety to see whether the mob would stop at the palace doors.

Pilate, in the Roman circus, had often heard the mighty roar from thousands of human throats, but that was the cry of an intoxicated populace witnessing the gladiator's mortal combat—a mighty sea of sound from men mad with the passion of the games, yet boding no danger. This sound was different. It was the unrestrained howl of an infuriated mob, blind in its passionate hate, uncontrollable in its anger.

"To Pilate! To Pilate! To the Judgment Hall! Stone him! Let Pilate crucify him! Death! Death!" were some of the cries heard above the roar of the multitude and the tramping of many feet. Pilate was now sure that the Jews were dragging to him some one on whom he must pass the sentence of death.

"Come, Melius, we will go to the Praetorium in the Tower of Antonia. We can leave the

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Lady Claudia here in safety. Listen! The angry rabble is now passing on down the street —the sounds are growing fainter."

"No, master, I will remain to protect the Lady Claudia," said Melius, bravely.

"Good boy!—and brave!" replied Pilate, well pleased, and stroking the youth's long waving hair, said, "do as thou sayest."

Pilate, with reluctant step, and finger crooked in indecision on his chin, left the peristyle of the palace. He walked through the garden to the Judgment Hall, which was about five hundred paces distant.

Melius endeavored to amuse Claudia Procula—to distract her thoughts. He took up a lute and played a soothing air. After a time, seeing that his mistress tired of this, he sent for some scrolls of vellum on which were inscribed some of the odes of Horace, the great Augustan poet. He read three or four of these with clear intonation and musical inflection, but of these also the Lady Claudia soon tired.

"Didst see the prophet, Melius?" she asked.

"No, domina, I saw him not. He was in the court of Annas when I passed his palace, but the crowd was so great around the doors that I could not get near. I doubt whether my toga virilis would have been a passport on this occasion."

"It seems to me that some cruel fate is hanging over us. Lately I have seen several omens which portend no good."

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"Nay, lady, thy fears are but the result of thy weakness. There is nothing that can harm thee. Is not the Lord Pilate supreme in Judea, and is he not the friend of the great Tiberius? Who, then, shall dare to lift a finger against him or thee?"

"But still I fear—ah! news! what news of the prophet?" she asked eagerly, as she saw Pilate re-enter the peristyle. His interview with the accused had been brief.

The Judean governor's face was less clouded by anxiety than when he left his wife not more than half an hour ago. It appeared as if some heavy weight had been lifted from his shoulders.

"I believe," he said, almost cheerfully, "the cause of the prophet is disposed of, at least so far as I am concerned. The Jewish sage is certainly a wonderful man—most majestic and very dignified in bearing. He appeared rather to be judging me than I him. I am convinced he is innocent of every crime his accusers bring against him."

"And so you acquitted him, and set him free. I am very glad," said Claudia Procula, earnestly.

"No—I—did not—do that," responded the Roman governor, slowly.

"No! and you say you are convinced that he is innocent! Pontius! and you a Roman judge!" exclaimed the lady.

"Enough! enough! what do women know of these matters!"

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"But, husband, I must learn all. The fates——"

"Now, Claudia," interrupted Pilate, "you do but excite yourself. You know that skilled Hebrew, as well as the Roman physicians here, have forbidden you excitement. Have they not ordered perfect quiet?"

"I know, I know, but tell me what you have done with him? Tell me."

"Well if you are so interested, I will tell you," and Pilate laughed softly at the way he thought he had escaped from a predicament. "Although the witnesses did not agree among themselves, by chance I learned that the man came from Galilee—was one over whom Herod could claim power. I therefore sent him to the tetrarch of Galilee, who, as you know, is at this time in Jerusalem. Was it not a clever——"

"Then he is lost!" almost shrieked Claudia. "Will not Herodias ask his life as she did that of that other prophet a year or two ago, and will not her drunken husband again grant her what she asks?"

"And if so, fair wife, see you not that I shall then be free before Tiberius, and so there will be one less tale, at least, carried to our august Caesar to harm me?"

Thus Pilate dismissed the subject.

"Come hither, Melius, and bring thy parchments. Hast written thy daily tasks?"

Melius brought his lesson, which Pilate examined closely, and seemed well pleased.

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"By the Twin Gods, boy, when thou shalt have reached man's full estate Rome shall have another Horace."

The youth's handsome face flushed with pleasure at the praise from his master.

"Nay, my Lord Pilate," he said, "I would rather follow in the steps and have the powers of a Cicero."

"Wouldst be an orator?"

"Aye, sir, that would I, and sway men's minds at will. That is grander victory than war e'er gave."

"So! so! that is thy choice! Well, go now and call for wine and we will hear thee in a speech of Cicero, or of Demosthenes."

It must be remembered that the Romans of that period used the Greek language with almost as much frequency as the Greeks themselves, and with nearly as much fluency, although not with the same purity.

The speech was, however, not given, for when Melius returned to the peristyle, the air was again filled with the cries and clamor of the returning multitude. Pilate once more repaired through his garden to the Praetorium. The floor of this open court was much higher than the space in front of it, which was known as the Gabbatha, or Pavement. It was here that meetings—mostly of a political nature—were held. From this open lithostrotos the Judgment Hall was approached by a flight of fourteen broad steps.

As the governor reached the hall from his

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private entrance at the farther end he saw, through the wide open doors in the arena below, a surging mass, composed chiefly of the lowest rabble of the city. Faces were flushed with passion. Many tore their beards or their garments in a frenzy of rage. Busy among the throng, going from one to another of the people, were priests of the Temple, intent on stirring up the worst passions of an already angry mob.

Pilate looked with disdain on these men who were venting their spite on an inoffensive and unresisting person. He regarded the leaders with a scorn he took little pains to conceal. They, in their turn, showed him but scant respect. He was convinced from the previous interview with the prophet that the latter was innocent. His Roman sense of justice—which had now returned in full force after his wife's words—determined him to liberate the prisoner. But these Temple priests! How influential they were, by some means or other, in Rome! How troublesome to him! and how insecure they rendered his tenure of office. Were there not many Jews in Rome in high favor at the court of Tiberius? Well, if reports went against him he would win them over with large presents of money, although the same should be extorted from their own countrymen, and in their own city. Would not a Jew do anything for money? Had not one of the prophet's own company, the night before, sold his leader into his enemies' hands for a

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paltry sum scarcely sufficient to purchase an outer garment!

Having lived in Jerusalem for some years, Pilate had learned with time to respect the religious customs and prejudices of the people. He knew that on the morrow was the great feast of the Passover, and that therefore no Jew would enter a Roman court of justice on that day or the day before. Taking advantage of this knowledge of their religious scruples, he secured another and longer examination of the accused in the Praetorium. As the second examination was progressing, the rabble were loudly and ever more loudly clamoring on the steps of the Judgment Hall in the space below:

"Condemn him! condemn him! he is worthy of death! If thou release this man thou art not Caesar's friend!"

The prosecutors, going to and fro from the tribunal to the people thronging on the Gabbatha, told the latter of Pilate's evident desire to acquit the accused. Upon learning this they became more clamorously angry, and more insistent in the demand for sentence of condemnation.

While all this was taking place in and near the Judgment Hall in the Tower of Antonia, the Lady Claudia had remained resting on her cushions under the porch in the coolest and most secluded part of the palace. The black slave girl had continued to fan her. The shoutings in the street had ceased to cause her terror. Lulled by the plashing music of the fountain in

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the impluvium, soothed by the perfume-laden atmosphere, she had fallen into gentle slumber.

Melius walked on tip-toe to the slaves' part of the palace to warn them not to disturb their sleeping mistress. Claudia slept lightly for the space of about two-thirds of an hour. Suddenly she awoke with a scream.

"Pontius! Pontius! Melius, come! Oh! I have had a fearful dream!"

The youth was, at the moment, in some distant part of the palace.

"Run, run, Cassa," she said to the frightened Galatian maid; "bring Melius hither."

Melius Velinus came running in alarm.

"Oh! that fearful dream! It was fearful! fearful!" she was saying when he arrived. She covered her eyes as if she would shut out the vision of some horrible sight.

"Be calm, dear lady. Tell me what you dreamed. You know the wise place no reliance upon what passes through the mind while the body is asleep. Perhaps by telling them you will dissipate these phantasies."

The trembling Claudia Procula arose from her cushions. Her hair, coiled in Grecian fashion, had become loose, and fell in showers over her shoulders. She reminded Melius of a sybil. As if still in her dream, with outstretched hands, she began to speak. At first her words were incoherent. Her voice sounded far away, but presently it grew stronger.

"High up on the black mountainside I saw my husband standing alone. The water at the

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foot of the rock was turbid and ominous. Above him clouds were mountained in inky blackness. Ever and anon from them darted the angry forked lightning, whose fiery tongues ran along the precipice as if eager to consume him. Fear was on his face—the fear of the hunted and condemned—despair was in his eyes. Then I heard a voice that filled the world. It cried: 'Thou hast slain the Just One for fear of the Jews. Coward! Coward!' and all the hills a thousand times echoed back the mocking words. My husband shrank back, clinging frantically to the face of the rock, and then I hid my face in horror, for in my dream I could see what was in his heart. Again some power compelled me to look. I raised my eyes to the mountain top, and there in light brighter than the sun I saw a Figure clothed in awful majesty.

"I looked once more at Pilate, and oh! I understood that he, too, had seen the awful vision. He could not, dared not, face that Figure on the mountain height. I saw him, with a shriek of despair that shall ring in my ears forever, throw himself into the black, hissing waters below! Go! go! Melius," she said frantically, "go to the Praetorium and tell Pilate to have nothing to do with that just man. Tell him how much I have suffered in a dream because of him. Tell him, oh! warn him to beware! Haste thee, Melius, haste!"

The young Roman hesitated to leave the Lady Claudia in her excited condition. Real-

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izing the importance of the message, however, he summoned several slaves and the slave mistress, and hastened to Pilate.

He had not gone many paces along the garden path when he met a Roman guard whom Pilate had sent to bring water. Knowing that the slaves would be in attendance upon their mistress, or at least too excited to attend to the demands of the soldier, he went to his own apartment and brought a brass basin and ewer, the latter capable of containing about two gallons of water. Throwing off his toga, he filled the ewer and carried it to the Judgment Hall.

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CHAPTER XX

BEFORE THE GOVERNOR

WHEN Melius, the son of the freedman Velinus, arrived at the tribunal he was surprised to see the hall deserted. The judgment seat, to humor the religious scruples of the Jews, had been removed to the platform of the portico outside the large doors of the Praetorium. At the moment of his arrival Melius heard Pilate say:

"Shall I crucify your king?"

Immediately came the response, angry, bitter, vindictive:

"We have no king but Caesar," and again followed that threat which Pilate so dreaded. "If you let this man go thou art not Caesar's friend."

At these words, which he believed threatened to deprive him of that power which he loved more than justice, Pilate's lips whitened. Great drops of perspiration stood on his brow. He trembled, nervously grasping the arms of his chair. The leaders of the prosecution were quick to see the power they possessed over the governor by the mention of Caesar's name. Their cries became increasingly clamorous.

"Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him! Crucify him!"

"Why, what evil hath he done?" pleaded

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Pilate weakly. The clamor increased. The whole people, intent on the destruction of one man, every moment became more maddened, more eager for his death.

Pilate, catching sight of Melius holding the brazen basin, beckoned him to approach. When the young man stood at the governor's side, he gave Claudia Procula's message:

"Have nothing to do with this just man, for I have suffered many things in a dream because of him this day."

The message made Pilate more irresolute than he had been before.

"Too late! too late!" he muttered to himself. "This fearful rabble is now beyond my control. Nothing but the sacrifice of this guiltless man will now satisfy them."

Turning to the young man, he said:

"But why art thou here, Melius, performing a slave's menial office."

"Pardon, good master," answered Melius, "the palace is all excitement. All are attending on the Domina Claudia, who is strangely affrighted by her dream. The soldier would never have found the water, or at least a vessel in which to carry it."

Melius, from his elevated position on the Praetorium steps, looked down on a wonderful sight. The multitude were shouting in frenzy. Men, usually grave and stately, now appeared to be beside themselves. Hundreds of hands were stretched forth demanding the punishment of the hated one, while fists shaken aloft

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expressed the vindictive rage of the multitude that the permission of their Roman master was so long delayed, thirsting as they were for the innocent blood of their victim.

Jews from every part of the known world were represented there. The variety, shape, and color of the costumes in this moving, terrific panorama would, at any other time, have presented to the youth an interesting spectacle. Now it was horrifying. Wealthy Jews, with patriarchal beards, vested in garments of richest color and material, and who on ordinary occasions would not have deigned to notice the beggar at their gates; the haughty Pharisee, to whom the touch of the common herd was defilement; priests of the Temple in gorgeous robes, and whose sacred functions demanded for them a personal homage, all now mixed indiscriminately with the offscouring of the streets, all intent on one purpose, all madly striving to procure one end—the condemnation of the great Nazarene prophet now standing meekly and silently before the Roman judge, a victim of the malice of those among whom for three years he had gone about doing good.

Now, for the first time, Melius, the son of Velinus, saw Christ.

Standing at the right side of Pilate, holding the brazen bath, Melius saw directly before him one who was the impersonation of manly dignity and calm majesty. The white garment of derision, which Herod had caused to be thrown around Christ, was not so significant of

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mockery to the Roman youth as it was to the Jews. Candidates for high offices in Rome were accustomed to wear white robes when soliciting the suffrages of the free people. The fool's white garment of the Jews had, therefore, little meaning for Melius. For him it rather enhanced the dignified appearance of the person standing before the judge.

Melius gazed long and earnestly into the face, noting every detail with closest attention. He saw that the rich brown hair of the captive was disarranged, and fell in some disorder over his forehead, the broad expanse of which was now a bloodless white. He saw the temples beat and throb. The delicate blue veins were visible. The cheeks were colorless and drawn, the lips of a bluish white.

The youth wondered at these marks of distress, for he did not know that they resulted from the ill-usage to which the captive had been subjected during the night by his malignant custodians, and from the many journeys he had been forced to make from tribunal to tribunal since the day had dawned.

The light-brown, forked beard was begrimed with the dust of the streets. The features indicated keen bodily, as well as mental suffering, but Melius was not slow to see that there was withal an ineffable serenity of countenance which told not only of a power capable of suffering, but also of a fortitude able to surmount, or patiently endure the worst his enemies could inflict.

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The young Roman felt an absorbing interest in gazing on this face. The calmness of expression, the dignity of bearing amid all the mockery of a trial—and he was quick to discern what a pretense of justice the whole proceeding was—riveted his attention and elicited his admiration.

He was thrilled in the wonderful presence. He was awed, and he trembled. There was something august, inexplicable, divine, about the silent captive. He had seen the robber Bar Abbas, when condemned to death a little while before, cringe and whine for his life. This grand figure stood erect, motionless, without fear, without speech, calmly facing the most fearful danger.

This serene composure baffled the young pagan's understanding. The expression on the placid face was such that, while it fully admitted the existence of present pain and suffering and shameful indignity, told him also that the soul within rose triumphant over what, to human understanding, was complete defeat. There was no arrogance in pose or gesture as the victim stood meekly before the representative of human authority. Quietly and unmoved did he see Pilate go through the empty ceremony of washing his hands before the Jews. In silence he heard his judge's weak words of shuffling excuse:

"I am innocent of the blood of this just man. Look ye to it."

When the fanatical Jews assumed their

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awful responsibility by the words: "His blood be upon us and upon our children," Melius saw a shadow of such deep sorrow pass over that superhumanly calm face that he believed the fury of the maddened populace would have ceased, could they but have seen it, too, and their cries for his blood would have been changed into a moan of pity and sympathy for his patient endurance of such awful suffering.

How the guilt of his blood was imputed to them, and of the awful retribution that followed, Melius was to learn in after years. At a later period of his life he would hear that after the fall of Jerusalem Jews were sold as slaves in bands of thirty for one-sixth of a piece of silver for each band; that the Roman soldiery caught the fleeing Jews, bound them to trees and cut them open in search of gold; that as many as five hundred Jews were crucified daily, until, finally, wood was wanting wherewith to make the crosses; that Titus dressed two thousand Jews in fools' garments and exposed them in the Roman amphitheater to the beasts for the sport of the populace.

Melius did not move his eyes from the face of Christ, who kept his own cast down. At the words—"Look ye to it"—he slowly raised his eyelids and looked straight into the face of Pilate.

That look had a strange effect on the judge. All his limbs quivered. The movement of his lips and lower jaw seemed beyond his control. His fingers once more convulsively clutched the

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arms of his chair. At this moment he appeared to be the one condemned, rather than the one condemning. All too well Pilate understood that look to be a last appeal to his better manhood. It was not made for mercy, but in entreaty to Pilate to save himself from the guilt of overwhelming injustice.

The judge knew the prisoner to be innocent. There occurred a keen struggle within him. Not altogether depraved, he desired to do what was right, but the desire was too vague and general to be effective. Self-interest was urging him to sacrifice this guiltless one in order to strengthen his worldly position—to render more secure his tenure of office by acceding to the wishes of the influential enemies of the prophet. The words, "Thou art not Caesar's friend," rang incessantly in his ears. The time-serving official had not the moral courage to unsay the words which rendered his name for all future ages a synonym for the betrayal of trust.

The look which Christ gave Pilate proved ineffectual. The sacred face then turned to Melius, but with what a different expression! To the judge it was an appeal to do justice for its own sake; to the young man the look was one of compassionate love.

The eyes, as Melius saw them, seemed a dark steel blue—deep wells of love. The young man thought as he gazed into those wonderful windows of the soul, that above all the pain and degradation and contumely, above all the hor-

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ror that the situation naturally inspired, above the cries of a wretched and blinded people, and everything that would indicate failure, there was in that gaze as it turned upon him, a power capable of satisfying all the cravings of the human heart—capable of bestowing a peace far beyond the reach of this busy, anxious world to grant, or touch, or take away.

Never had Melius been so strangely moved. His heart pulsed rapidly. Great thoughts and great longings new to him surged through his mind. Desires, as yet unanalyzed, for better things, for a higher life, for grander, nobler deeds, filled his heart. The young man never forgot that gaze. Amid the busy scenes in after years of marts, and circus, and forum, amid the luxuries of Roman villas, or the carnage of the field of battle, that wonderful face was never wholly obliterated from his memory.

The generous impulse of untainted early manhood made him, in his heart, thoroughly despise the weakness, and the wavering policy of Pilate. Under the influence of the gaze of Christ, Melius turned to him, and exclaimed passionately:

"Oh! my Lord Pilate! dismiss this man. Do you not see he is innocent!"

The Judean governor winced under the appeal. It showed and verified to him the cowardice he was trying to hide from himself. It stung him the more keenly, coming from one to whom he was really attached. He hastily gave the signal to the guard to lead Christ to the

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pillar of flagellation for the scourging which was the fate of all condemned to death by Roman law. Pilate then turned to the young man.

"Get thee away, Melius; meddle not with my affairs of government. Get thee to the Lady Claudia. Tell her I come at once."

Melius returned to the palace by the garden path. His steps were slow, for he was pondering over all he had seen and heard. He shuddered as, from over the high wall which separated him from the street, he heard the howls and shrieks of satisfaction of the mob who were witnessing the scourging and gloating over the tortures of the victim. According to Jewish law the officer who administers flagellation must smite with one hand only, but with all his force. Melius knew that in this case the burly Roman soldiery, whose trade it was to inflict pain, were the executioners.

Owing to the meditative pace at which he had walked, he had barely entered the palace when he was overtaken by Pilate, who was flushed and excited.

"Hast seen the Lady Claudia?" he asked.

"I have but even now reached the palace," was the reply, given in a crestfallen manner.

"Fool! I sent thee to inquire," replied Pilate, angrily brushing aside the young man and hastening to the peristyle.

"Ah! you have saved the prophet!" exclaimed Claudia, in great excitement, as soon as she saw her husband, "my fearful dream hath

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saved thee from a great crime! Rejoice with me, Pontius!"

The procurator checked his rapid steps, and then stood frowning moodily before his wife. Why, he thought, would women interfere in such matters as these. He liked not this interference.

"I knew that Roman justice would prevail," she continued; " 'tis the boast of our great empire that no prisoner is ever condemned unjustly."

The Lady Claudia Procula did not realize that every word she was uttering was as a dagger in her husband's heart smiting his conscience with tremendous force.

"O wife! wife! cease thy talk," he exclaimed, unable to bear it any longer, and added with the desperation he was beginning to feel: "He will be crucified."

He was little prepared for what followed. Claudia Procula arose from her reclining position and stood upright and rigid, face to face with her husband. With all the emphasis, with all the scornful, regal dignity she could at times assume, she spoke but one telling, biting word:

"Coward!"

The man of weak will did not resent the imputation, which his own heart told him was but too true. As Claudia Procula began again vividly to recall her terrifying dream, she wildly ran her fingers through her long, loosened hair, and, forgetting the presence of her husband,

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her hands upraised above her head with tresses still clinging to them, she shrieked:

"Lost! lost! Let the lightnings strike and the waters overwhelm! Forever lost! Oh! oh! all! all is lost!"

In her excitement she began to sob. Pilate was much disturbed by what he considered her hysteria.

"Save him!" she cried, now clinging to him, "save him! or you are lost! Show these barbarians his stripes. Go, go quickly. Surely they will be appeased by such a sight, and will not demand his life!"

Under the influence of his wife's vehemence, and partly prompted by his own desire, Pilate hastened once more to the fortress of Antonia, determined to make a last effort to excite the compassion of the people by showing to them the abject condition to which they had reduced the object of their hatred. His attempt was unsuccessful and appeared to infuriate the Jews still more.

The governor had scarcely left the place where he had shown Christ to the people, and entered the Praetorium again, when he heard a disturbance as of some one trying to force admittance and being resisted by the guards.

"O soldier! let me pass, I pray. I must see the procurator ere it be too late," he heard a woman say. This was instantly followed by a man's tones:

"I assure thee it will be useless. He is as

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heartless as are our own countrymen. Come! Come home with me."

"No, no, no. Where is Pilate? I must see him. I must make at least one effort."

At that moment the guards saw the governor. One came forward and asked what was to be done.

"Admit them," said the ruler sullenly. He did not care what annoyances followed now. He was angry at his own powerlessness to move the Jews by his last effort. A man and a woman came hurriedly forward. The woman threw herself upon her knees before Pilate, in her impetuous haste pouring forth a flood of speech.

"O my Lord Pilate! save this victim. He is innocent of all crime. Why wilt thou let him be dragged undeservedly to the cruel death of the cross? Thou thyself hast declared there is no cause in him. For the last three years he hath cured the sick, given sight to the blind, and hath even raised the dead! Is it for this that thou wouldst kill him? I tell thee, representative of Roman power, if thou lettest this great one die, it will be the death of thine ascendency. We know him for what he is. We believe in him, and I tell thee, O great Pilate, if thou crucify him thou wilt incur the awful guilt of deicide. He is God."

She paused for breath, but quickly continued:

"Will gold persuade? Take thou all my gold and jewels—my lands and castle. Save

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him and bring him to us and immense wealth shall be thine."

Pilate looked with even some compassion at the kneeling figure before him, whom he saw was a woman of the most perfect Jewish type. Her beauty was greatly enhanced by her strong excitement.

"O lady, I am helpless. I can now do nothing. These rabid and spiteful countrymen of thine have the victory. It is too late to save him."

"So I have told my sister, O governor," said the man at her side, "but if there be a way of escape which money will provide, I will add all my wealth to hers to save him. Thy victim, O Pilate, is God, who for some mysterious end submits to human authority. This I do not understand. Canst thou save him? If thou wilt do this for my sister and for me immense riches shall be thine."

Pontius Pilate mused for a moment, his chin upon the palm of his hand. He would fain take the money, but he knew the impossibility of now performing his part of a bargain he was willing to make.

"I am Lazarus, once raised from the dead by him whom thou hast condemned, and this——"

"Is thy sister, Mary, the rich heiress?" asked Pilate, with unfeigned curiosity. He tried to look into her face, but her head was bowed down. She was crying silently at the failure of her appeal. Pilate then turned to look at

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Lazarus, from whom he shrank with a feeling of superstitious awe.

"Wert thou really dead, or only in a trance?" he asked.

"I know that I was dead; that my soul was separated from my body. This great one whom thou hast dared to consign to death, by his omnipotent power recalled my soul to inhabit its tenement again."

By this time the governor's astonishment and feeling of awe had passed. His cynical mood returned.

"Doubtless thou believest all this. If thy prophet be divine and equal to the gods, why doth he submit to all that hath been done to him to-day?"

"That, O Pilate, is a great mystery, which we, his followers, do not understand at present. It shall all be yet made clear. I know, O governor, that if he chose he could reduce thee to a handful of dust on the pavement here."

Pilate moved uneasily. He was a little frightened. He tried to make light of the statement by saying:

"It is hardly time for that, my friend. My funeral urn is not yet fashioned," and then becoming more serious, he remarked: "I can do nothing. He is condemned. The law must now be fulfilled. I am powerless now."

He turned and left the Judgment Hall, hearing as he did so a heart-rending cry from the lips of Mary. Her passionate love for him by whom she had been pardoned, had prompted

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her to make this useless attempt to save him. Lazarus had accompanied her for protection, certain that nothing could be effected, and not surprised at the result of the interview. Mary, who had acted with high hopes, but with more love than prudence, was bitterly disappointed.

"Come, my brother," she said as soon as Pontius Pilate had retired, "let us at least go to the hill of execution. Powerless to help, we can yet show him that we have not forgotten him. He will know that we would help him if we could."

The ascendency, as Mary said, did not long remain with Pilate. Affairs did not go prosperously with him after this time. Many insurrections and disturbances in Jerusalem followed. A few years later than the events here recorded, Caesar Tiberius was sick. Having heard many things of the wonderful prophet of Galilee, he sent messengers to bring him to Rome, that he might receive a cure from him. The imperial couriers were told of his death. The emperor inquired why the prophet had been deprived of life and summoned Pilate to answer to the charge.

When the governor of Judea arrived in Rome, Tiberius was dead. Caius Caligula was reigning. He took up the case, and Pilate was condemned, his estates confiscated, and he was banished from Rome.

In all his vicissitudes Melius never forgot the face of Christ. The vision of those marvelous eyes haunted him in the glare of the

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noon-day sun and in the twilight of evening. Up to the period of his own downfall, Pilate remained kind to the young man. When he saw that misfortune, and probable poverty, were about to overtake him, he provided for Melius by giving him one of his farms and fifty slaves. The gift was ratified by the Roman judges when the confiscation came.

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CHAPTER XXI

THE PROMISE

THE daughter of Zadiel Ben Israel, who was present at the first coming of Christ to the house of Lazarus, and who then recognized him as the former guest of her father of many years before, firmly believed in his divinity.

Once or twice in the intervening years, since that visit when she was a child, she had seen the great teacher, but on those occasions she did not recognize him. It never occurred to her until they met at Bethany to identify the miracle worker with the one who had so greatly influenced her when she had first seen him.

While once in the North, she had witnessed the stupendous miracle of feeding an immense multitude with a few loaves and fishes. She never forgot the excitement of that occasion. Often that day she thought the populace would forcibly crown him king. This event occurred after they had met under the same roof at the home of Lazarus, and she believed in his divinity. Now, in his apparent defeat, and in his condemnation, she waited with a curious expectancy, wondering how it was all going to end, yet without detriment to her faith.

The excitement of the whole populace was intense. She knew that a large majority were opposed to him, yet was aware that there were

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a considerable number also who believed him to be divine, and who saw in him a great prophet sent by God.

She remembered—so remarkable an event could not be easily forgotten—how, less than a week ago, the whole city had been roused to unwonted enthusiasm by the solemn entry of Jesus. The people's admiration, like a pent-up force of water, had broken all bounds. In their enthusiasm they had divested themselves of their cloaks and spread them along the road, cutting large branches of palm and strewing them in the way, or waving them in their hands amid shouts and exclamations. She would never forget that sight. It appeared to her that the people were actuated by one common impulse of spontaneous admiration. She remembered that even the priests of the Temple—those who were known to be violently opposed to the great teacher—had remained silent and passive in the face of the universal plaudits, not daring to offer opposition to so unwonted a demonstration.

On the eve of the great Passover feast, Miriam had heard strange rumors concerning her friend. Her heart sank with dread when she learned how the public feeling had veered. Early in the morning she had learned, not without alarm, that through the machinations of some of the priests, he had been seized and brought a prisoner to the Temple. All the morning the city had been in a tumult. Messengers ran along the streets, telling the news

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of the proceedings of the courts of Annas, of Herod, and of Pilate. She, in her seclusion, did not know that the priests had stirred up the people and crazed them into madness. This change in the popular sentiment was baffling to her, and she gave up trying to understand it.

One excited messenger had just passed her door, from whom she learned that her friend and guest of years before had been condemned to death by Pilate, and was at that moment setting out amid a great gathering of Jews, a few faithful friends, and a company of Roman guards, to the hill of Golgotha, where he was to be immediately executed.

Miriam was deeply pained at these untoward events, although her faith remained unshaken. In her heart she knew and felt him to be the Christ, the Son of God, yet why he should suffer these things she could not understand, nor did her long and sorrowful pondering bring her any enlightenment. She did not doubt of its accomplishment, yet she wondered much how the manifestation he had promised her so long ago would be accomplished.

"And thou, daughter of Zadiel, shalt not only see his face, but it shall never leave thee."

These were the mysterious words she had treasured in her heart for years. She now remembered, with a thrill, that the promised manifestation was to take place in the very street in which she lived. In a curious state of mind, puzzled yet confident, she determined to go down into the street and see what would

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happen. As she was about to leave her apartment, acting on a sudden impulse, the reason of which she could not have explained, she paused to attach a fine linen cloth, or towel, to her girdle.

Miriam had not more than closed the door of her dwelling when a great throng came into view around a bend in the irregular street. Her house was situated not far from the bazaar of Lazarus. She saw that as the throng advanced toward his place of merchandise Lazarus and Mary, who was weeping passionately, came out and joined the company of sorrowing women who were closely following Christ.

In the distance Miriam watched the three condemned approaching, surrounded by horse-soldiers, who experienced no little difficulty in keeping back the throng of infuriated and spiteful Jews. Almost every class was represented in the angry gathering. Among the dull colored clothes worn by the poor were mingled the brilliant vestments of the priests. The richly clad merchants jostled with the lowest in Jerusalem.

As they came nearer to her, Miriam was deeply pained to recognize many of those now loudly clamoring for the death of the prophet as the very same that she had seen foremost in shouting hosannas, and waving the largest palm branches only a few days before. As the procession advanced slowly to where she stood, trembling with nervousness and indignation,

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she saw the guest of her youth once again. Jesus was carrying a heavy cross and dragging his feet as if about to fall at every step. Mary of Magdala was close behind him, giving way to an agony of grief.

The gentle daughter of Ben Israel was horrified when, as the victim reached the place where she stood, near her own door, through sheer weakness he fell to the ground under the weight of the cross, amid the redoubled cursing and shouting of the rabble. Those closest to him, and among them Mary, thought he would die before he reached the place of execution.

Dust and blood and sweat had so begrimed the face of the sufferer that Miriam could with difficulty recognize his features, but she saw on his face the pallor of death. She was horrified, on getting closer to him, to see a wreath of thorns on his head. She had never heard of executioners acting with such wanton cruelty before. Knowing little or nothing of the horrors of the flagellation, nor the vindictive malice that had inspired it all, she could not understand why the wreath was there. In her kindly, simple nature, believing that no human being would unnecessarily inflict pain, she said:

"O soldier, take off that crown. Do you not see that it is causing him pain?"

The nearest guard, a low, brutal man, totally incapable of appreciating the gentle sentiment which urged the request, broke into a strident

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laugh, and ordered Miriam to stand aside. It was at that moment Jesus fell.

Upon looking around with the idea of procuring assistance, she was surprised to find none of the men whom she had known as his disciples present. When the condemned had again risen to his feet there was some delay while the heavy cross was lifted from the ground and placed again on his bruised shoulders.

During that minute, notwithstanding the order of the soldier, Miriam, with a woman's persistence, pushed her way through the crowd. She took the linen towel from her girdle, and, actuated by the purest sympathetic compassion, pressed it to the face of Christ, for the purpose of wiping away some of the blood and dust. When she removed the towel, she was rewarded by an ineffable look of gratitude from the sufferer. The guards having given the order to move, the procession started once more. The rabble pushed her roughly to one side and passed on, and was soon lost to view, leaving the street once more deserted.

Upon re-entering her apartment Miriam placed the towel on her table. To her unbounded astonishment, she saw for the first time that it retained perfectly the impression of the face it had covered. She lifted the piece of linen, thinking that the resemblance to the suffering face must be an hallucination of her overwrought imagination. She expected the cloth would fall into its natural folds again.

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But no! It remained stiff and hard, as if it were a mold. All the features, and even the blood-stains were there! A true likeness of the face of Christ had been left on the towel.

Miriam's faith was strengthened. She knelt and fervently acknowledged him who had so recently passed by in dishonor and ignominy and with every mark of failure, as her Lord and God. She could not understand how a divine person could be reduced to such a pitiable condition, or allow himself to be taken and condemned and put to death, yet her faith did not waiver. She was content to wait, confident that as by this miracle he had inundated her soul with gladness, so in his own good time he would make all plain which was now dark and obscure.

Ere the sun had reached the zenith the sad procession had arrived at the place where the world's great tragedy took place. An immense multitude had followed the three condemned. On the sorrowful journey Mary had much to do to be able to keep on her feet. Early she had been separated from Lazarus, nor did she see him again until they reached the summit of the hill.

When the victim reached the plateau upon which, as tradition relates, Adam was buried, there was a pause, as if all nature were taking breath before the final scene of horror. The guards allowed no one near the condemned three. The throng, enemies, sympathizers, as well as mere sightseers, were thrust from the

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level place and now occupied the slopes of the hill. Lazarus looked anxiously around for Mary, but could find no trace of her.

Near the son of Siro stood a man who was well advanced in years. Lazarus thought he had seen him before, but could not remember where. The stranger appeared to be in the deepest grief, frequently beating his breast and his forehead with his closed hand, and moaning aloud. So demonstrative was his sorrow that Lazarus concluded that he was a believer in Christ, and perhaps a disciple. He, therefore, spoke to him.

"Art thou, friend, a believer in this Christ also?"

"Nay, I believe not, as many do, that he is divine."

"Why, then, thy deep sorrow?" asked Lazarus.

"For other reasons than you thinkest," replied the stranger. "Seest thou yonder young man whom they are now nailing to his cross?"

"Meanest thou Ishmerai, the robber of Edom, or dost thou mean Omri?" asked Lazarus, for they were both being crucified.

"Omri, or as some call him, Dismus," said the stranger.

"Is he a relative of thine, who, having strayed from the path of right, is now paying the penalty of his evil course?" asked Lazarus sympathetically.

"He is no relative, yet my conscience smites me this day because of him. Thou knowest he

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was condemned with the robber Bar Abbas not many days ago. That merciless leader of a large band is, by a curious chance, again free. Many believe he has a charmed life. His escape to-day, through the unreasoning frenzy of a rage-intoxicated people against him whom they call the Christ, will go far to strengthen this belief. Why did not the people demand the release of Omri instead of Bar Abbas!"

"From reports he seems less deserving of death than the leader," remarked Lazarus.

"The report is true; and I am stricken with remorse for the part I have had in his downfall."

"Tell me thy story, friend," said Lazarus, "a great grief is sometimes assuaged by confiding it to another."

"Years ago," resumed the stranger, "when this criminal, who has been freed to-day so unexpectedly, lived here in Jerusalem, he was considered a patriot. Many thought that in time he would become a great leader, but his high aims degenerated. He began to seek his own aggrandizement, using means to that end which were often violent and shameful. In those years the country was infested with many robbers. Bar Abbas became one of the most daring."

"I remember his evil reputation," said Lazarus.

"When he threw off all pretense of patriotic or religious motive, he placed himself at the

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head of an organized band, who have for years been the terror of travelers between Jerusalem and Alexandria."

"Did this Omri join that robber band?"

"Not for a long time. He came from Antioch and was of good family. Bar Abbas, when he was living in Jerusalem, once robbed this young man of a considerable number of jewels."

"Ah!" exclaimed Lazarus, in great excitement, as the remembrance of all his father's troubles came back to him. "Proceed, proceed, my friend. I am anxious for thy story."

"From that time, although the young man recovered the precious stones, his course was a downward one, until he finally joined the robber band."

"Yes, yes—and the jewels!"

"I was the tool and agent of Bar Abbas at that time, and took them to the bazaar of a silk merchant, who bought them of me for a large sum of gold."

"Knowest thou his name?" asked Lazarus.

"'Twas Siro, the silk merchant. He was guiltless of all intention of wrong-doing when he bought them."

"May the God of Abraham be praised," said Lazarus, fervently.

The stranger looked at him in surprise.

"Thou appearest to be much interested in my story," he said, "one would think thou hast some personal cause."

"Look thou at me," said Lazarus, "and

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answer thou truly. Hast thou ever seen me before?"

The other gazed long at the face of Lazarus, but there was no light of recognition in his eyes.

"I have never seen thy face," he answered.

"Rememberest thou not the son of Siro, who first spoke to thee when thou camest to the bazaar?"

"Ah! now I remember. Yes, but years have changed thee. Why dost thou ask this question?"

"Because it hath been the wish of my life to find thee. Know that when my father, at the instigation of Omri, was called before the Sanhedrim, he considered that he was disgraced and dishonored for life. I tell thee, man, it was a cruel blow to him! He never recovered from it. He died a few years after, mourning to the last that his reputation should have been besmirched."

Lazarus was deeply moved in once more recalling these circumstances.

"Thy name—" he began again.

"Is Eliziel," said the stranger, thinking he was asked for it.

"I know it," replied Lazarus. "Thy name was on my father's lips when he breathed his last. His one desire was that I should find thee, and that thou shouldst vindicate his name."

"That will I do willingly, and will go before the Sanhedrim after the Passover, if that

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should be thy wish," said Eliziel. "Bad as has been my life—and there is much to be forgiven in it—I swear by the God of Abraham and, if thou wilt, by yon figure of the great prophet whom our people are now murdering—I swear that thy father, Siro, the silk merchant, was free from all taint of complicity. No dishonor attaches, or can attach, itself to his name."

"May God be praised!" exclaimed Lazarus, fervently. "Justice hath been done to his memory. Thou wilt make it public after the solemn feast. I have fulfilled his dying request."

Further conversation was prevented by the deafening roar, which sent the blood tingling through the veins of the friends of Jesus. The great moment had come. Tens of thousands of eyes were directed to the summit of Golgotha. The soldiers by means of ropes had placed the cross of Christ in an erect position, and he was lifted up to the gaze of the immense multitude. The moans of sorrow of his few friends were drowned in the awful roar from the throats of the still angry gathering. Christ, the friend of the Jewish people, who they strove to believe was their enemy, was in his death agony before them.

Before the mysterious darkness came on, Mary of Magdala, who had often been driven back by the rough soldiers, pushed her way to the very rim of the crowd. Lazarus, who had tried many times to approach to the foot of the cross, was held back by Roman spears. Mary,

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with love's strong will, and with the help of gold, succeeded in getting through the barrier. The criminals had now been secured. There was no longer danger of an attempted rescue, and the soldier who finally allowed her to pass thought she was a relative of one of the three now suffering tortures.

Almost blind in her sorrow, she ran stumblingly over the narrow plateau. In an abandon of grief and love she threw herself on her knees at the foot of the cross, flinging her arms around it in a transport of sorrow. There she poured out her heartbreaking sobs, and watered the ground with her tears.

Two other figures stood beside the cross. The Mother of Sorrows, seeing the extremity of grief of the one kneeling at the cross, stretched forth her hand to comfort, and laid it gently on the shoulder of Magdalen, saying with tender pity:

"Mary, I, too, have sorrowed. Thou shalt be my friend!"

She of Bethany looked up and, through her tears, for the first time saw the mother of her Lord.

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CHAPTER XXII

AN OFFICER'S EPISTLE

"FROM Flaccus, in Jerusalem, to his wife Severa, at Rome. Greeting:

"I have learned that a vessel sails from Joppe at the end of five days. The sailing master has promised to convey my letter to you, for which kindness I beg of you to receive him with respect. I trust that our two boys, Victor and Maurus, are good and obedient, and growing up to become good citizens. It is a long time since I saw them last. You remember, dearest Severa, that it is now nearly six years since I came to this great and wonderful city of Jerusalem, in the company of soldiers whom the governor, Pilate, brought with him when he was made the procurator of Judea.

"It is a long time to be away from my wife and boys. Well, take courage, Severa; in twelve months more I shall have my furlough, or shall then be sent to Rome to remain.

"Your letters concerning our boys fill me with gladness. Tell them I shall expect to find them good scholars when I return. I hope they are obedient to the ludimagister.

"I have followed the fortunes of the Empire in many parts of the world, and yet I have always found some time for reading. My ability to write on vellum—something the majority

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of the soldiers of our legions can not do—keeps me in touch with you, and fills me with joy when I receive an epistle, or can find time to write one to you.

"I do not know that you may be informed of all that has taken place here in the past few days. I have not time to tell you of the wonders of this city, but I will keep to the prophet who has been, during the last three years, filling this province with the praises of his wonderful works.

"He is called the Christus. He is poor as to the goods of fortune. It is reported that he has neither house nor lands, nor so much of his own as to be considered other than the poorest of the poor, but never was there a more royal figure. The Imperator never displayed more innate majesty.

"You will be surprised to learn that out of sheer malice these Jews, his own countrymen, procured his death twenty-four hours ago. You know, dearest Severa, I am a captain under Pilate. On the night before the Jewish priests succeeded in bringing about his death, I was sent from the garrison, which overlooks the great Temple, with a small detachment of soldiers to the house where the prophet was kept a close prisoner, awaiting his trial in the morning.

"I have seen many rough soldiers in my campaigns; have witnessed much excess in the plundering of cities and provinces, but never did I see such wanton cruelty to an unoffending

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person as I saw the night before last. To-day is the great Jewish feast of the Passover, and everything is quiet now, otherwise I should be performing military duty instead of writing this epistle to my loved ones. The city was not so quiet yesterday—but I will tell you more of that anon.

"It has always been the boast of the Roman soldiery, as well as of the governors and magistrates of the Empire, that a man is regarded as innocent until he is proven guilty. On this night, the soldiers set to guard the accused one were instigated by an unaccountable fury of malice, treating their prisoner with the utmost contumely and as one already condemned rather than as one not yet tried. I learned to-day that with wine and money the soldiers had been instigated by the Temple priests to treat the captive in this manner. These same priests had caused his arrest, having paid a member of the prophet's college to point him out to them.

"They dragged him from one pontifex to another through the greater part of the night. The great teacher was then turned over to the keeping of my few soldiers, who detained him in a room partly underground.

"By some means or other, many of the Jewish rabble had found their way into this room. These added to the ribaldry of the guards. Several of the rabble knelt before him in mockery, offering homage. Tiring of this, and seeing they could not anger him, they struck him

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heavy blows on the face and shoulders. When even this moved the great personage neither to anger nor retaliation, the ordinarily fair-minded soldiers, mixing indiscriminately with this street rabble, conceived a new plan of ignominious treatment, which, proving successful, was repeated the following day.

"Those gathered in the room had often heard the captive hailed as a prophet. One grinning, gibbering Hebrew, almost insane with hatred, with bleared eyes and the spittle running down over his unkempt beard, tore a strip from his gaberdine, and went behind the prophet. Mounting a seat, he threw the piece of cloth over the face, thus completely blindfolding the prisoner. This highly pleased the uncouth rabble, who, with shrieks of laughter, and jeers and screams, cheered the exploit. When the eyes of their captive were not on them, his tormentors became more audacious. Some vilely spat upon him in token of their contempt and because of their ineffective rage. They would willingly have killed him had they dared usurp the prerogative of Pilate, in whose hands is the question of life and death.

"He who had torn his gaberdine to make the bandage for the eyes, struck him on the face amid the laughter and jeers of the others.

" 'Prophecy who it is that struck thee,' shouted one who was standing on a bench against the wall in the rear of the room.

"His followers claim for him that he is a divine being, and I fancy I hear Victor or

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Maurus ask why he did not kill them all. Jove would have hurled his lightning bolt at them and slain them.

"Not so with this one. He was all meekness and gentleness, and without resentment, and this not because he did not possess the power to destroy them. I was told that once that night he did use his power. It was at the moment he was arrested in a garden outside the city walls. By a word he struck every one around him to the earth. Quirinus, an old comrade of mine—we have been in many parts of the Empire together—witnessed this display of power. It so affected him that to-day he tells me he believes in the prophet's divinity. When the prophet permitted the prostrate and frightened men to arise, he uttered, so Quirinus says, a mysterious sentence, over which I have pondered deeply.

" 'This is your hour and the power of darkness.'

"What can these words signify, my Severa? By them he certainly gave those who had stolen out of the city in the darkness on their nefarious errand the power to take him. By the same words, it is evident, he gave the rabble who had managed to gain admission to the prison the power to offer him every kind of insult and indignity during the hours before the dawn.

"Without remonstrance he bore all their jeers and insults. His forbearance was that of Godlike power. Yet he was weary. Frequently I saw him change from one foot to the other

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to rest himself. Frequently, also, I saw him wince involuntarily, as if human endurance could bear up no longer under some particularly revolting insult. Though he answered nothing, he bore everything with a patience which I am sure none of our Roman divinities would have exercised, if they are such as our poets picture them. His patience must have come from a divine power within him.

"You have already, doubtless, wondered, my Severa, why I permitted all this. More than once I sharply reproved the men, but I found I had little influence over them. They appeared to be possessed, equally with those dirt-begrimed, rabid Hebrews, by a species of maniacal hatred toward the inoffending captive, who neither tried to escape nor caused them any trouble. I believe all the furies of the nether world were in that room stirring up men's angry passions. I was heartily glad when my men were ordered back to the fortress, at dawn. As they went, some of them seemed as if intoxicated with the passions they had aroused. Never have I seen Roman soldiers act with such malicious hate. I have often seen men in the madness of Bacchanalian orgies, but these men yesterday morning appeared to be influenced by a spirit more furious than wine could inspire. It was a fanaticism which lasted many hours, and ended in a brawl among themselves in which two or three were killed.

"As for me, although I had been up all night,

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and on military duty all the day before, I could not sleep. That calm, patient Presence in the prison chamber exercised a strange influence over me. One thought has been, since then, continually in my mind. What if this prophet should, after all, be a divine being? Oh! Severa, if this were so, what terrible crimes have not the soldiery and the horde whom they abetted committed during the watches of the night!

"Yesterday was a day of much intense excitement. There were many thousands of visitors in Jerusalem, come to attend the observances in the great Temple. These solemnities and the Temple in which they are performed have made this Syrian city famous throughout the world. To-day, everybody declares that, in some mysterious way, its grandeur seems to have departed. They say there is a coldness and a heartlessness about the countless sacrifices never felt before. Many people are speaking about this singular fact to-day, but no one is able to give an explanation.

"The unrest in the city yesterday was universal. Owing to the influx of visitors there must have been close to a million people in Jerusalem, and throughout this mass of people there was a feverishness which all felt but none could explain.

"As I told you before, I did not sleep after my night of military duty. I was too much under the influence of the restless spirit of the day. Not having to report to the commander

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of the fort until the setting of the sun, I was free to go where I willed. I did not go to Pilate's hall of judgment, where the malicious Jews had dragged their victim. I know this Pilate. I know his vacillating character. I more than suspected he would show how weak he was, but I did not expect that he would show himself as weak and wavering as he did. His act, dear Severa, has made every Roman in Jerusalem hang his head for shame. There never was a grosser miscarriage of Roman law. That these heartless Hebrews willingly assumed all responsibility does not exonerate the magistrate. It will be to the eternal shame of Pilate that he condemned this prophet to death after he had declared him innocent.

"An hour before the sun began to decline the journey to the place of execution was begun. From that time the day was full of marvelous happenings. The hill of execution is a few minutes' walk outside the city wall. It is reached by a road over one of the numerous streams which flow near the city and supply the cisterns.

"The people had thronged to and filled every foot of space from the city wall down into the valley and up on the hill, and even into the valley beyond the place where criminals are put to death. The scene presented a vast sea of human beings. The voices of the many thousands rose as the roar of an angry ocean. The costumes of all nations under the sun were there, for expatriated Hebrews adapt them-

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selves to conditions, and so adopt the dress of those among whom they sojourn.

"Did you ever see, Severa, the streets of Rome, when the gladiatorial shows are over, and the people are literally belched forth from the numerous vomitories of the amphitheater? So it was here yesterday. Being the day before some great religious festival, it was a time when no labor was performed. The many thousands were glad of some diversion. Certain it is, that immense concourse saw more marvelous happenings than the world will ever see again.

"Never, as long as I live, shall I forget the wonders that took place. The great teacher was nailed to a cross at noon. When the sun had descended three hours in its course, he expired. There was a solemn, awe-compelling silence at that moment. The vast throng, with one accord, seemed to hold their breath. On the faces of some of the sacerdotes there was a look of triumphant malice. On every face, whether Hebrew, or foreigner, friend or enemy of the condemned, or curious sightseer who had come out for amusement or in search for some excitement—on all faces there was a look of horror at the deed accomplished. Many women shrieked and swooned from the tenseness of their emotion. Others, both men and women, were seized with a fanatical fury which found expression in howling and prolonged screaming, and throwing dust into the air.

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"Then occurred a phenomenon so awful and mysterious, and so contrary to all the laws of nature, that it almost passes description, and yet the reality can no more be doubted than one can doubt his own existence, for it was witnessed by all those thousands upon thousands of people.

"When the great prophet expired, the sky began to assume the shades of night. Perceptibly the shadows came up. In a very short time the hill of death and the city were in total darkness. Nor was it the darkness of night, in which there is always some glimmer of light, but an awe-inspiring pall over all things. So great, so pervading, was the enveloping blackness that I felt as if I were trying to breathe under water.

"When this strange shadow began to engulf everything, the sky was clear of clouds, and the sun shining brightly, and it was in the middle of the afternoon. Men and women stood riveted to the ground, clinging to each other, not daring to move. Ever and anon, from different directions on the hillsides, there arose a wild shriek, forced from the lips of the more timid, now victims of the most abject fear.

"The power of numbers, in which men usually find strength and courage, but added to the terror. So enormous was the mass of people, that flight, even had the darkness not prevented, would have been impossible. Strong men, trembling, struck their breasts for the fear that was coming upon them.

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"Amid the darkness one object was visible. The white, bloodless form upon the cross was plainly seen. In the pervading blackness, while nothing else could be discerned, the body of Christ was distinctly seen by all the people. To those who looked upon it, it had the appearance of transparent ivory. The light of Calvary was the crucified Christ.

"I could not take my burning eyes from the sight. Through all the hours that have followed I have seen this vision. After some time—we could not tell how long, for we were enthralled by the awful events of the hour—a strong beam of light broke through the intense blackness. This light grew stronger in quite as wonderful a way as it had failed, but it did not come from the east, as does the light of dawn. It appeared to emanate from the cross, first lighting up the hill of execution, and then the whole world. When the multitude could be seen once more, a wonderful sight met my view. Of all the thousands who had witnessed the execution, very few remained standing. Scores, hundreds, were groveling with their faces to the ground. Numberless women, in every direction, had fainted and appeared as if dead. Others, men and women, were kneeling and striking their breasts. Some one near me said aloud: 'Truly this is a divine person; this is the son of God.'

"As I have been writing this letter, I have several times wondered what my Victor would have done were he here and had the power. I

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believe he would have wished to kill the wicked murderers. And my gentle Maurus? I think I hear you say, dear Severa, that his gentle nature would have prompted him to seek out the afflicted mother of this victim, and console her. He would not have had to travel far to find her, for she stood during the whole of the awful tragedy at the foot of the cross, wounded to the heart by the jeers and taunts she could not prevent.

"Having read thus far, I am sure you are ready to ask me whether I believe in this Christ as a divine being. I have seen more than most men. All the previous night I witnessed his sublime patience—his Godlike meekness.

"No man could have undergone what he did from that rabble without resentment and anger. Remember this, O Severa, that when the execution and death came, I saw, and the Jewish priests saw, too, that the great teacher was doing and suffering all these things because he freely willed to do so. There must be a divine power in one who can suspend the laws of nature at will, and—I believe.

"This avowal may be a surprise to the wife of my heart. Wait, O Severa, until I find another vessel about to sail for Rome and I will send you more particulars. I can not write more at present, for he who goes to Joppe to the sailing master is even now at my door impatient for this epistle.

"Embrace Victor and Maurus for me.

"VALE."

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CHAPTER XXIII

AFTER THE SABBATH REST

THE tragedy was over. At evening the city lay dormant and almost silent, as if now exhausted from the intensity of its passion throughout all that day. Men whispered in awe of the strange things that had happened. Among the more portentous was the rending of the great veil of the Temple. This mysterious occurrence had leaked out and become well known, although the priests had tried to conceal it, for it was sure to be regarded by all as an omen of disaster.

Another report also passed from mouth to mouth. A short time before the beginning of the Sabbath, some merchants had gone to the palace of Caiphas. They declared they had witnessed terrible sights. The high priest was as one crazed either with fear or remorse. Ever since the Christ was first brought to him he had sat, clothed in his magnificent vestments, in his chair of state within his richly decorated hall, except for that short time when he had mingled with the throng at the Gabbatha. The light of reason seemed no longer to illuminate his mind. Gibbering and muttering to himself, and at times foaming at the mouth, the merchants were convinced he had become insane. Ever and anon a wild passion

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would seize him and he uttered fearful blasphemies.

The paroxysm passing, he would talk and mutter to his upraised finger, as if in the attempt to vindicate himself of something. Much of what he said was incoherent, but the merchants understood that the self-imprecation which he had instigated the people to utter at the condemnation of Christ was weighing most heavily on his ruined mind. He constantly muttered the curse: "His blood be upon us—upon me—me!—me!!" and his mutterings would end with a demoniacal shriek. His attendants had much difficulty in preventing him from dashing out his brains against the polished porphyry pillars.

During the Sabbath's sorrowful inactivity, Mary of Magdala, Mary Salome, and the other devoted women heard the direful news of the condition of Caiphas.

They waited impatiently for the legal hours of rest to pass, during which it was unlawful to engage in any manual labor. At the close of the Sabbath, toward the gathering dusk, the women began to gather at the bazaar of Lazarus for the purpose of preparing spices for embalming the body of Christ. Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and Lazarus, assisted by servants, had reverently placed the body in a rock sepulcher, intending to embalm it after the Oriental manner when the Sabbath would have passed. Lazarus willingly and reverently placed his great store of spices at the disposal

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of the women, who began busily to make preparations.

Magdalen was weary and exhausted from the excess of grief she had experienced that day; nevertheless she assumed the management of everything. Martha was present, and although she knew more of the art of embalming than her hitherto indolent sister, having superintended this work for Eucharia and Siro, and, more recently, for her brother, yet she did not interfere, because she saw that Mary's devoted love found solace in performing these last sad offices for their friend.

Later in the evening the mother of Christ came to the bazaar. Every one gave her a sorrowful veneration. She did not perform any of the labor of preparation, but all deferred to her judgment when any doubt arose as to the best manner of proceeding. The devoted women worked all night, busily preparing the cere-cloths and ointments.

About midnight the door of the bazaar was several times struck loudly with a staff. Some one was seeking admission. Joseph and Lazarus cautiously opened the door a little way, inquiring what was wanted. Lazarus was aware that the chief priests had determined to take his life. He did not know when he might be seized.

"Who cometh at this hour, and what dost thou want?"

"O master, let me enter. I have fearful tidings. I am Pathira."

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The door was thrown open, and the Egyptian, breathless from running, entered.

"What hast thou to tell? Speak," urged Lazarus, while all the little zealous company gathered around him.

"I have run all the way from Bethany, my master, knowing that the city gates would be open all night at the Passover time. 'Tis a weird tale I have to tell. We had all retired to rest two hours ago. Not long after, a horseman—he must have been a friend of the prophet—stopped at the castle and aroused us. Upon asking what he desired, or whether he was bearing a message from you, for I thought, O master, that he had come from Jerusalem, he replied that he had come, not from the city, but from the opposite direction. In returning from Jericho, he had wandered off the road and come to a desolate, rocky place. Here, in the fitful light of the paschal moon, he had been much frightened by seeing before him, suspended from a branch, the dead body of a man. Upon closer investigation, he discovered that it was the traitor. Judas has hanged himself."

The startling news was variously received. The impulsive Mary, although she spoke no word, was evidently pleased at the intelligence brought by the messenger and showed it in her countenance.

"Sister!" said Lazarus, in a reproving tone, much as one would chide a child. Realizing the importance of Jewish family burial traditions, he saw how much Mary intended. He knew

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her impetuous disposition. He knew, too, that she had been trying to check her hasty outbursts since her conversion. He loved her the more for her efforts, yet there seemed to be something so incongruous in her manner, in the presence of the mother of him whom Judas had betrayed. That Mary intended it for an unspoken malediction there can be little doubt, when it is remembered what the Talmud taught concerning the unhappiness of a soul whose body lies unburied.

The penitent began to speak angrily.

"Mary!"

This time Lazarus spoke quite severely. It was an unmistakable reproof. The Magdalen's face flushed, and the old rebellion spoke in her eyes. There would have been more angry words had not both, at that moment, been attracted by the calm face of the Mother of Sorrows. Her hands were extended toward Mary, who went to her. The mother clasped her arms about her and for a moment gently drew Mary's head to her own shoulder, whispering:

"Leave him, daughter, to his God," and peace filled the soul of Mary as the mother of the victim soothed her.

The men in the bazaar held a whispered consultation, being careful that the mother of the crucified should not hear them. Presently Lazarus called Pathira and told him to go back to Bethany, arouse a number of the household and conduct them to the place where the body of Judas had been found. If the body were

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still there, they were to cut it down and bury it by the roadside, deep enough for safety from the jackals which infested the wild hill country of Judea.

When the preparations were complete Mary, the mother of Jesus, was persuaded to take some rest. Lazarus knew something of the agony she had suffered. The sight of her dead son would open all her wounds afresh. Reluctantly she complied with the wishes of the company, and Lazarus and Nicodemus took her to the lodging which John had procured for her. Leaving her in the hands of him who had been called her son by Jesus on the cross, they returned to the bazaar, and then accompanied the women to the sepulcher.

With sad hearts the few friends of Jesus set out to perform the last offices of friendship for one they so ardently loved. Little was said by the way. Each was occupied by his or her own sad thoughts. It was a solemn, sad journey in the darkness after midnight.

There had been an earthquake on the afternoon of the great tragedy. Many of the tombs and funeral monuments on both sides of the road that led to Calvary had been disturbed or demolished. By the light of the dim moon could be discerned, here and there, an open cave-grave, the stone door having been shaken down or broken. Tombs revealed the gruesome sight of the ghastly trappings of the dead. The travelers came across more than one open grave, the earthquake having split the ground.

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It required strong nerves and brave hearts to make the journey in the darkness. None but those actuated by an overwhelming love and devotion toward one who had exercised such a subtle influence over them would have had the courage to undertake it.

It was known to most of the frightened disciples that the women would take spices to the sepulcher as soon as the Sabbath was passed. A watch was set and when the little group from the bazaar passed the cenacle, several of the disciples joined them.

Mary of Bethany did not fear the darkness nor the spirits of the night. Her whole thought was centered on the dead body of her Lord, and how she could best show it love and reverence. She wondered whether the men of the company would be strong enough to remove the heavy stone slab. Once, the rock-tomb had been pointed out to her by her friend Nicodemus, who told her that he intended it for his own burial place. He was wealthy and had spared no expense in its appointments. She had heard rumors during the Sabbath that Pilate had ordered a guard of soldiers to watch the tomb for some days. She was in ignorance of the cause of this order, but she would pay the soldiers well to assist the others in removing the great flat stone, and in replacing it afterward. She knew well the power of gold with these soldiers.

The vases of ointment were deposited a little distance from the tomb. Mary had communi-

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cated her design to her brother, who went forward in the darkness to find the soldiers. Except for the noise of his sandals crunching along the gravel path, and the distant hoot of a night owl, there was profound silence in the garden. The moon had gone down. It was intensely dark, being just before the dawn. Suddenly Mary heard a loud cry from Lazarus:

"Mary! Mary! come! be quick! The guards are not here, but they have opened the tomb."

Mary eagerly ran forward.

"That is strange!" she said. "Their hearts must have been touched. They must have retired to some other part of the garden so as to leave us unmolested in our sad task."

The first yellow streaks of dawn began now to appear in the east.

"It is all very strange," said Lazarus. "See, the stone has been revolved around as if it moved on hinges! See, it now lies flat against the rock!"

"Let us go in," said Mary, and she fearlessly entered the sepulcher.

A moment later she came out, with blanched cheeks and wide-staring eyes, seemingly incapable of speech. Lazarus, in the growing dawn, regarded her with amazement, which was increased when she flung herself upon the ground and burst into tears. After letting her weep for a short time unmolested, thinking the sad associations of the tomb had overpowered her, he asked, gently:

"Why dost thou weep? Tell me, my sister?"

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"Oh! they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him!"

"Impossible!" said the brother, "no one would do such a thing."

It was now quite light. All wonderingly gathered around the grief-stricken Mary. For some time no one thought of verifying her words. As suddenly as she had thrown herself upon the ground, she arose and began to wander around the garden. She stumbled on blindly, tears raining from her eyes. Coming around again to the tomb, she stood there weeping. Peering once more into the dark cave, she saw two angels, although she did not recognize them as such, being completely preoccupied with the thought of her loss.

"Why weepest thou?"

She repeated the words she had said to Lazarus.

"Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

That was her grief; her overpowering love losing sight of self and everything else. Taken him. Who was he? All the world ought to know. He! All the world must know who he was. Hers was the inconsistency of truest love.

"Tell me where thou hast laid him and I will take him away."

This was madness. She could not take him away. She was not strong enough; but her love did not think of impossibilities. In the excess of her love there was but one thought,

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one dominating idea—to be with, to find, the body of her master, friend, Lord, God, everything! Her love had appropriated him to herself. He was lost. "Tell me where thou hast laid him."

Again, nearly blinded with her tears, she roams about the garden. In the distance she sees some one walking. It must be the caretaker of the grounds come thus early to his labors. She does not look carefully, for her eyes are blinded with tears.

"Whom seekest thou?"

Once more she repeats her heartrending refrain:

"They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

"Mary!"

Oh, the tone of that voice! the love in it! the kindness in it! the interest it evinced! One word, but what a revelation!

It was the same voice that once raised her from sin and degradation, that had by its omnipotence transformed her to a being who now lived in love and solely for love. At its tones light breaks in on her intelligence. She remembers the promise of the great one, how he had said he would rise again. She begins to understand now many sayings which when first heard made little impression on her mind. Jesus had declared that he would rise again by his own power. He who could call back life to her brother must also have the power to reunite his own separated soul and body. As a

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flood of light illuminates her understanding, her soul is inundated with joy, increasing the love already there. She throws herself on her knees, and exclaims with a heart-cry of ecstasy:

"Rabboni!"

In her delirium she clasps and clings to the master's feet, once more watering them with her tears—tears now of joy and adoration, but perhaps not of greater love, for Mary had, ere this, exhausted its possibilities.

The risen master placed his hand upon her head, as if he would soothe her exultant agitation. She continued to embrace his feet, and as wave after wave of consciousness surged through her intellect, showing her all the resurrection meant for herself and the whole world, she vehemently, deliriously, clung on. She will never let him go! In the tempest of her love and joy and gratitude she embraces his feet again and again. She is almost insane with delirious joy!

At length the risen master said in gentle tones:

"There, there, Mary! do not cling to me so; you impede my steps. I have not yet ascended to my Father. You will see me again. Go and tell my disciples that I have risen from the dead."

She raised her joy-bedimmed eyes and looked into the face of Christ. Once in her worldliness and sin she had gazed into those eyes and had seen there a love capable of satisfying the

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human heart's most unbounded desires. That same look of love was there now, but intensified. The rest of her life was nothing but one long act of ardent, consuming, increasing love for Christ.

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CHAPTER XXIV

BEYOND

FAR up on the slopes of the Sabine hills, a short distance from Rome, in the year forty-five of the Christian era, stood a comfortable stone house. Its sides and even the greater part of the roof were covered with luxuriant vines bearing bunches of luscious purple grapes. Many acres of the rich soil around were vine-clad. The autumn sun was low in the west, tinting the leaves a golden hue and clothing the distant hills in purple. Over the quiet scene, far away from the noise of city strife, came down the evening peace of tired nature. Nothing was heard save the hum of insects, or the far-off bark of the faithful sheep-dog guarding the fold on the hillside.

On the vine-embowered porch sat Melius, the son of Velinus, resting after the labors of the day, and enjoying the cooling breeze which came up from the sea. He peered frequently down the lane of vines and along the public road. He was awaiting the return of one of his most faithful slaves, sent that day into Rome to make inquiries concerning the recent arrival in that city of one who, in Judea, had been a disciple of that great prophet. Melius had never forgotten that meeting with Christ on the Praetorium steps in Jerusalem. Day-

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light had almost departed when he heard steps approaching. His messenger had returned.

"The great man whom you sent me to find," said the slave, "received me kindly, and bade me wait until evening to guide him to you. Behold, he is here."

Melius arose and warmly greeted the visitor.

"Peace be to this house," said the stranger, to whom Melius knelt, reverently kissing his hand.

"Art thou of the household of faith?" inquired the stranger, evidently gratified with the respect shown him by the younger man.

"Seest thou not, reverend master, that even now I wear the white robe of Baptism?" answered Melius.

"Ah! mine eyes grow dim through the shedding of many tears. I can not see well in the darkness. Thy messenger led me to believe that many in thy household and thyself art believers."

"Master," replied Melius, "I believe in him whom I saw at the Praetorium when Pilate ruled in Jerusalem—in him who looked into my soul as no human being could. His face and those wonderful eyes I have never ceased to see. He, the Christ, is the one true God, and the son of the living God. For this truth I am willing to lay down my life."

And Peter answered:

"Thou shalt lay down thy life, my son, but thou shalt find it again. Melius, thou hast indeed chosen the better part."

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Peter abode an honored guest in the house of Melius for many days, instructing and baptizing all who came to him.

"Knowest thou, my son," said the chief of the apostles, one day, "knowest thou that Lazarus and his sisters were driven by the malicious Jews from Bethany?"

Melius had not learned this. Having embraced the faith of Christ, he was much interested in all the friends of the great teacher.

"Tell me about them, I pray," he said.

"The fervor and love and altogether angelic life of Lazarus and his sisters after the Lord's resurrection was the glory of the Church. Their example caused many to become believers. The mother of Jesus lived with them for some time at Bethany until she went to live entirely with the disciple John. Mary disposed of her immense property and gave the money to the poor, or laid it at my feet for the use of the faithful. She and her handmaid, Marcella, together with Lazarus and Martha, were finally put on board a vessel at Joppe by the angry Jews, who with malicious hate saw daily the number of Christ's followers increasing. The ships they were forced to enter had neither sails nor rudder, and their enemies thought and hoped they would drown. The Lord sent an angel to assist them in their voyage. They landed safely and without mishap in Gaul at Marseilles, that peaceful harbor where the waves are never high, and of which it is said *'mare ibi silet.'* "

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"I am rejoiced that they landed safely," said Melius, who was much interested.

"Lazarus," continued Peter, "is now bishop of that city, its former servant of God, Maximin, being chief pastor of the flock at Aix."

"God be praised! Would that I, too, O Peter," said Melius in his fervor, "would that I, too, some day might be found worthy to celebrate the holy mysteries, and teach the people the knowledge of Christ!"

For a long time Peter gazed silently at the young man as if studying his possibilities. At length he said:

"Perhaps, in the providence of God, Melius, that great happiness may yet be thine. I will consult the Lord in prayer, and test thy fidelity first."

"Try me, master. Give me some difficult work to do."

"Wouldst thou be willing to undertake a journey which may result in good to the Church?"

"Aye! to the ends of the world!"

"Content thee. 'Tis but a short journey, either by land or by sea," replied Peter. "Thou knowest Lazarus of Marseilles, thou knowest his story, how he was once dead, and was called back to life?"

"Ah! I remember the event," exclaimed Melius, "and what wonderment it caused in Jerusalem. 'Twas but a few days before Christ's own death."

"That is true, my son, and it was the raising

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of Lazarus by the son of God that determined the blinded Jews to do away with him who is the master of life and death."

"It was not Lazarus who caused the master's death," said Melius, "for I saw him come to Pilate and offer his wealth for the Lord's rescue."

"I did not say he was the cause," replied the other; "his resurrection was the occasion of the resolution made by the Jews."

"Thou wishest me to see him, good master?"

"Yes, it is my wish that he tell as much as he may of the mysteries beyond the grave."

Melius was greatly pleased at being intrusted with such a mission. Within ten days he set sail from Ostia, and after an uneventful voyage landed in the waveless harbor of Marseilles.

Arriving when the sun was about to set, he sought lodgings at an inn. That evening he made inquiries concerning Lazarus of some Christians whom he discovered in the market-place. A mild-mannered young man came and stood by Melius, who was drawing a figure on the ground with his staff.

"Art thou a believer?" asked the resident.

"Aye, sir. I believe in Christ, and in all that token means to his followers," pointing to the figure he had traced on the ground—"I have passed through the waters of regeneration. Who art thou?"

"I am the deacon of the holy bishop Lazarus. Wouldst thou see him?"

"Aye, for that I am come, but it is too late

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to-night. I will attend the mysteries on the morrow, if thou wilt lead me to the place, and after that I will see Lazarus."

In the morning the deacon conducted him to the house where the sacred mysteries were celebrated. After refreshment, offered by the owner of the house, he was taken into the presence of Lazarus.

From the remembrance Melius had of the appearance of Lazarus as he had seen him in Jerusalem in the year of the passion, he would not have recognized him in the aged man before him. His hair was now white and long and falling down to his shoulders. His beard was of great length and silvery, his appearance very venerable. Lines of care and advancing age were clearly marked around his eyes and mouth. Melius observed that his eyes had a faraway look in them, as if they were still viewing the beings of another world.

The believers in Christ at Marseilles, while they loved him, and regarded him with great veneration for the sanctity of his life, felt, in his presence, a species of awe, knowing that he had once passed the portals of death.

When the Roman convert entered the room the bishop was sitting with his hands folded before him as if in meditation. He was clothed in a white robe reaching to his feet. A girdle of knotted cord around his waist tended to accentuate the leanness of his form. The face was almost colorless, and the backs of the long, thin hands were knotted with blue veins.

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When Melius entered, he arose and embraced him with dignity, giving him the kiss of peace, and saying, *"Pax tecum."* He pointed to a seat. Melius was deeply impressed with the solemnity, and yet withal with the kindliness of the remarkable person before him. Lazarus waited calmly for Melius to disclose the purport of his visit.

"Reverend sir, I am, as thou knowest, a traveler from Rome."

"Thou art welcome to the faithful of this place and to their pastor," returned Lazarus. "I saw thee at the mysteries not long ago. May I inquire the purpose of thy visit?"

"I fain would hear thee tell, good father, of thy experiences in that other world beyond the grave."

"Pry not, my son, into things not given to man to know. Rest thee content with the knowledge of thy faith, and make use of the graces which it brings. Do this and it will be sufficient. Thou wilt then fulfil the end for which thou wast created. Seek not to lift the veil of the future."

In all this there was no reproof, although it was spoken with an air of authority.

"I would not have ventured, reverend father," said Melius, "to make inquiries, but that I have been sent to learn from thee such things as thou mayest choose to reveal."

"Leave these things alone, my son. Why seekest thou to peer into the awful secrets of the other world? Thou hast enough to occupy

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thee in the doctrines of Christ, which are destined to change the face of the world, without trying to lift the veil of the beyond, which God's wisdom hides from the knowledge of men."

"Good father, I pray thee believe that I make not this journey to thee from idle curiosity. I have been sent by the believers in Rome to learn what thou wilt be pleased to disclose."

"Tell the brethren there to be content with what the Gospels teach, and with the doctrines which the apostles are now spreading throughout the world."

Melius was disappointed. He was about to retire and return at once to Rome to report to Peter his unsuccessful mission. He was on the point of rising, when Lazarus asked him a question:

"Who among the faithful in Rome sent thee, my son?"

"It was Peter himself. He hath arrived in Rome but recently, and hath honored me by being my guest. He it was who sent me to thee."

"Peter!" exclaimed Lazarus. "The blessed chief of the apostles! Peter, the visible head of the Church! Whatever he desires I will endeavor to grant. Come, my son, to me this evening as soon as the sun shall have set, and then I will speak to thee."

When the evening came Melius went to the house where Lazarus lodged. He found the

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bishop sitting on the portico which faced the blue waters of the Mediterranean. For a long time Melius did not disturb the meditations of the holy bishop, who appeared to be settling in his mind the order of the wonderful facts he was about to relate.

"It is true," he began, "that my position in the Church is unique. Of this I would not speak except in obedience to Peter. I am the only grown person whom Christ ever called back from the land of spirits. The widow's son of Naim and the daughter of Jairus were children. I have never seen them, nor do I know what they learned. This I know, that what I have learned has given me the true view of life.

"When the separation of the soul from the body was past, instantly I stood before God. Did I see God, thou askest. My intellect, released from the trammels of the flesh, operated unimpededly, and I was conscious of being in the presence of the great Creator of the universe. I knew at once, clearly, the difference between right and wrong. My consciousness was most acute. I saw that my soul, and the souls of all mankind were created to give a special glory to God. I instantly recognized this, and, also, that the only obstacle which thwarted the end the Creator had in making the universe was sin, or the putting the finite and puny will of the creature in opposition to that of the Creator.

"I learned as by intuition that all men were

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guilty of this, and that all men were doomed to a condign punishment unless an adequate satisfaction were offered for the loss of divine glory by reason of man's perverted acts. Catching but a temporary and partial glimpse of the deity—such as is vouchsafed to all men the first moment after death—my soul was, nevertheless, inundated with the profoundest sorrow when I realized the sad state of mankind, and the hopelessness of all to reach the eternal reward.

"Then my soul was enlightened and with my illumined intellect I understood more fully the plan of redemption. I saw that the Second Person of the Divine Trinity was willing to assume the very nature of those who had offended, and in that nature to offer a divine satisfaction. Then was I exceedingly glad, for I saw that man would be saved, although heaven was as yet closed by an angry God to the creatures of his hands.

"By this infused knowledge I saw that many just ones were waiting in the spirit land for their release and entry into heaven, which could not be until the redemption had taken place. Their repentance and justification had been accomplished, and they had been perfected in purgatory, in view of the merits of this future redemption.

"An angel conducted me to this limbus of the fathers, where those holy ones waited and sighed, the prisoners of love. In that holy place, Adam, the father of our race, Abraham,

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our holy David, and all the great ones of our sacred books surrounded me. And oh! their anxious waiting!

"Before my death, he, who had deigned to call me friend, had instructed me in the plan of redemption, and it was my joy to be able to tell these holy patriarchs of their near release. Although I could not tell them then the precise manner of the redemption of all mankind, yet I could assure them from the knowledge Christ had given me at Bethany, that before very long these holy souls who had waited so many centuries would mount triumphantly into heaven.

"The angel who attended me wrapped my soul in ecstasy, and in the vision I saw most wonderful things. Methought I stood alone in the world on some desert plain where man had never trod. There I saw a figure as of human form. Thousands and tens of thousands of bright spirits surrounded him, bowing in lowliest adoration. This Presence possessed the awful majesty of divinity, filling my soul with the desire to annihilate itself in adoration before it."

"Whose was the Presence, good master?" asked Melius, trembling with excitement as he listened to the marvelous narrative.

"This question I asked of the angel at my side. He answered that this divine figure in human form was God the Son, the Second Person of the adorable Trinity. I was told to look again. I did so, and my soul was filled with

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rapture. I saw in the divine face the features of Jesus of Nazareth, who was then as I knew in the wilderness of Peraea. Although, Melius, I had believed him to be divine before my death, now I was given to see some of the majesty of his great glory. Now I caught a glimpse of his awful sanctity. Now I realized the world's great event was the Incarnation of the Son of God. I saw that this was the one great act to which all created things, all sacrifices, all worship and praise, were pointed, toward which all converged, in which all centered. This was the one great event of the world. To him all sacrifices referred until he came, and by him were all their merit and value. He is the one great sacrifice for all time to come.

"In my illuminated state I also recognized to what great dignity his chosen apostles were raised. Peter shall live through all the ages the beacon-light of the world. Those who shall cast themselves loose from Peter shall lose all. And then my soul became sorrowful, even as if it were about to cease to exist, for in my vision I saw nations and countless peoples in the future ages, who by their own sins and blunders, or by the sins of their rulers, had left the light of Peter, and had gone out into the shadows of darkness. My sorrow was increased sevenfold when I saw that these tribes and peoples were unconscious and regardless of their loss.

"After this I was shown the true nature of

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the mission of Christ upon the earth. The future was unfolded. I saw all the passion and the crucifixion. I then knew all this had to be, for the whole plan and economy of salvation was made clear to my intellect, and my soul was filled with joy ineffable when I realized the immense glory which would accrue to Christ from his passion and the redemption of a fallen race.

"Suddenly, in the midst of all these revelations I heard a voice sounding clearly through the spirit world. It was the all-powerful voice of the Son of God, calling my soul back to inhabit its body.

"The angel carried me to the portal of death. I was fain to remain among these great mysteries, but I was impelled, by a will stronger than my own, back to the tomb.

"Earth henceforth had no charms for me, save my sisters' love. I had witnessed wonderful things in the great beyond. My intellect had been illumined so as to know him truly who once deigned to call me friend, and to love me.

"When from Mount Olivet I saw him ascend into heaven, whence he had come, my very soul went out in longing to accompany him, but he inspired me with the knowledge of the work he required of me on earth. To this day my soul is filled with awe that I should be chosen to be his instrument for establishing in this part of the world the knowledge of his kingdom. I am content to wait his will. The time

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will not be long. I daily pray it be not delayed. I shall soon go to be forever with the Lord, my God."

"If thou knew, O Lazarus," said Melius, when the bishop ceased speaking, "that the death of Christ was to take place, why didst thou offer large sums, with Mary, to Pilate in the Judgment Hall for his release?"

"I came there to safeguard my sister. Thou rememberest the fury of the rabble that day. She did not know as much as I. Seeing her earnest love and devotion, I joined my offer to hers, my human sympathies speaking rather than my surer knowledge. I had some hope that the crucifixion might be made less cruel and less barbarous."

"Why did Christ choose to suffer such an excess of torture?" inquired the messenger. "Would not his least expiatory act have been sufficient to redeem the world?"

To this question which Melius asked, which thousands have since asked, and which thousands will yet ask, Lazarus replied:

"It was the mystery of love. Out of his superabundant love he chose the path of sorrow, and pain, and ignominy. It was all for love. Love henceforth rules the world, and love is pain."

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